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MARIAMNE

BEING THE THIRD OF THE TRAGEDIES OF JEWISH

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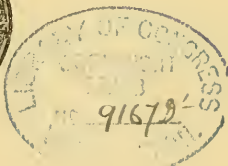
AND THE

SECOND IN CONTINUATION OF VOLUME VI

OF THE DRAMATIC SERIES

BY

LAUGHTON OSBORN



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M A R I A M N E

MDCCLXX

CHARACTERS, ETC.

HEROD, *King of Judea.*

JOSEPH, *his uncle, Salome's husband.*

ARISTOBOULOS, *Mariamne's brother, High-priest.*

ANTIPATER, *Herod's son by Doris.*

ALEXANDER, }
ARISTOBOULOS, } *Herod's sons by Mariamne.*

HYRCANUS, *Mariamne's grandfather, formerly High-priest and
Ethnarch under Cæsar.*

SIMEON, *a prominent member of the Sanhedrim.*

SABBION, *an adherent of Alexandra's.*

ÆSOP, *one of Alexandra's household.*

MARIAMNE, *Herod's favorite wife.*

ALEXANDRA, *her mother, widow of Alexander, son of Aristoboulos King, and daughter of Hyrcanus.*

SALOME, *Herod's sister.*

CLEOPATRA, *Queen of Egypt.*

DORIS, *Herod's first wife.*

*Two of Herod's train. Guards with their Captain. Officers of
the King's household. Members of the Sanhedrim.*

SCENE. *In Act I., in and near Alexandra's house at Jericho. In
the remaining Acts, in the King's House at Jerusalem.*

MARIAMNE

ACT THE FIRST

SCENE. *A room in the house of Alexandra, at Jericho.*

HEROD. SABBION.

Her. Hast thou made sure the horsemen be arriv'd?

Sab. Sent by the Queen of Egypt? Yea, O King.

I found them on the sea shore,¹ stretch'd at ease
On the warm sand, the while their steeds take food,
Waiting the coffins —

Her. With their living dead.

And are these truly here?

Sab. Since twilight here.

Would the King see them?

Her. No. It was a wile

Worthy of Cleopatra and of her

Who matches her, if not in subtle craft

Yet in industrious malice, and in intrigue
Restless as her ambition, which sleeps not,
Or with half-open eyes,— of her, I mean,
My spouse's mother and, to my aggrief,
The grandchild of a king. How took the dame
The news of my arrival?

Sab. As one hears
A thunderclap, while yet the distant clouds
Have given no warning. I had some ado
To keep her shaft to the bowstring, urging flight
While means were in procinct; that, if pursu'd,
The royal train was scanty, nor could cope
With the Galatians.²

Her. In her woman's mind,
Which brooks not disappointment, the fix'd will
Would do more than thy urgency.

Sab. But my haste
To warn her of thy coming, the belief
That I, her friend, was still among the foes
Of Herod King, did more to waken trust
In my close promptings; which took added force,
That I had caught the secret unawares
No man was told but Æsop.³

Her. It is well,
O Sabbion, nor against thee shall the past
Be once remember'd. Though thou hadst taken part,
As thou reneg'st, in my great father's death,⁴
Yet for thy love-deed to the son even that
Should be as it were bury'd. But this boy,

Whom for her sake,— for quiet, I would say,—
I lifted to the seat that was her sire's,⁵
Seest thou, I shall have trouble while he lives.
Had she made good her flight, hadst thou, my friend,
(Thou shalt have royal guerdon,) been less prompt,
Or I been distant farther ——— 'Tis a thought
Grim as a nightmare : now 'tis shaken off,
I dread to sleep again. Is this to be ?
Shall my mind know no slumber, but the hand
Of Alexandra must press on my breast
And her boy's fingers seem to loose the knot
That ties my diadem ? Thou didst note of late
How, at the Feast of Tents, the people gaz'd
On the lad's beauty and his kinglike mien,
Where in his gold and purple, bell'd and boss'd,
With tire like Aaron's, at the vail he stood,
Awful yet youthful. I have heard men sigh'd,
Comparing him with me, and wish'd the plate
That glitter'd on his frontlet were a crown
That should replace my fillet.

Sab. They were men

To set boy David, dancing round the Ark,
Before the might and majesty of Saul.

Her. Thou flatterest, but thou soothest not. I am told,
They prated of his foresires and their deeds
Achiev'd for Israel, and how little meet
It was a new stock should supplant the old
That grew so glorious.

Sab. Is it fifty years,

(Bear my correction!) since that boasted stock,
 Propp'd on the glory by Matthias won
 And his five sons in battle, after stain'd
 By tyrant and by kindred blood, reach'd up,
 Through him who starv'd his mother and took off
 By murderous hands his brother,⁶ reach'd and snatch'd
 Through him, the monarch of a year, that band
 This boy of the same name will never wear,
 And which his father wore not? Scarcely more
 Than twice that time has pass'd since those brave men,
 Sprung with their sire from a village priest,⁷
 Became the lords by valor of this realm.
 What had they, or in prowess or in birth,
 Or in the skill to govern, or in deeds
 That make illustrious and extend a realm,
 That wants my lord the King, that not his sire
 Might boast of, whom great Julius rated well,
 That judge of valiant men?

Her. Again I say,

Thou flatterest me, but soothest not. Thou art shrewd
 And talkest wisely, but thou hast no skill
 To read the people. Fickle, fond of change
 From envy of success and hate of power,
 The past to them is glorious, and the yoke
 Lighter that has been borne than that they bear,
 Though they have put it on, themselves, and dragg'd
 With emulous necks the car of triumph. Perch
 Each day a victory on my helm; to cross,
 And prison, and the soldier's sword, through me,

Give all the robbers that e'er haunted cave,⁸
And make the land from Dau to Beërshéba
Secure from pillage or the spoil of war,
I should not give content. The Maccabees
Glow in the distant heaven and loom large.
The old Hyrcanus with his earless head⁹
Recalls his great precursor,¹⁰ and the boy
Whose downy lips his daughter would have tempt
Rome's great triumvir,¹¹ even in his name
Carries a magic which sheds no like spell
On mine.

Sab. With pardon of my lord, the spell
Is in his name itself, which mighty deeds
Have circled with a glory whose broad rays
Dazzle the world even now, and after time
Shall lighten, through its records, making known
The first crown'd Herod as the Herod Great.

Her. Ah, might that be! But to ensure that name
I must have scope for action, nor my mark
Be cross'd by rivals, or made dim by mists
Of household quarrel. Cleopatra's nod
Is all but absolute with Antonius. Get
The boy beneath her wing ——— I almost wish
That burial-project had been carry'd out.
They might have stifled, the intriguing pair,
In their false coffins, and their fate had seem'd
Just punishment for them, reward for me.

Sab. 'Tis not too late, my lord. The cloths drawn close
Over the mummy-cases——

Her. No, no, friend !

It might be said I will'd it, I being here.

Then, what is Alexandra ? Not in her

My peril lieth, though by her made more nigh.

Take from her hands her instrument, the boy——

[*Pauses.*

That suffocation must be easy death.

'Tis very warm to-night, has been all day.

My train is dusty and will seek to bathe.

How are the ponds about here ? very deep ?

Sab. Enough to swim in.

Her. So enough to drown.

Be very careful therefore, if the boy

Should take to the water, lest he meet mishap.

I might be censur'd.

Sab. Means my lord to go ?

Her. 'Tis likely I may stroll there, for the sport,

To see it merely, and the boy with me.

Should he go in, thou wilt have care, my friend,

Both for his mother's sake and for my own.

He hath rul'd as high-priest only for a year.

Was not his foresire of the name a king

For the same time ? That hath an ugly look.

Give heed, then, wilt thou, Sabbion ?

Sab. Be thou sure

I shall have heed, O King, to thy desire.

Her. What shall I do for thee ? Go now to her,

To the boy's mother. I would take them both

Even in the act. So manage to that end.

Sab. My lord, on his part, will not fail to chide
And rate me in their presence?

Her. 'Tis well thought.

I must make much of thee. I had in view,
To give now as an earnest of good will,
For thy mere present ease, till I could place
Thy merits in fit station,—for thou art wise,—
Ten talents, Sabbion. See, on my return,
Thou gettest twenty.

Sab. O my lord the King,
Thou art too bountiful.¹²

Her. Not to prov'd desert.

That shalt thou find. I would my means were more :
But the old sepulchre gives not again
Its treasures to the explorer, and the greed
Of my wife's foresire left me nought to glean.¹³

Sab. My lord's soul is too large for this cramp'd realm.
He should have Syria, and the Egyptian crook
Might well yield to a straighter sceptre.¹⁴

Her. Hush ;

Thou stepp'st on dangerous ground. All yet may be.
Nor is Arabia far. Where Herod wins,
'Tis known he has memory both for friend and foe.

[*Exit Sabbion, Herod looking after him,*
as the Scene changes.

SCENE II.

*A vaulted chamber of the basement,
lighted dimly by a hanging lamp. Above on the right,
a low and narrow arched door. Near the door,
resting on low trestles, between two columns,
what appear to be two burial-cases, covered with
a sort of pall.*

ALEXANDRA. ARISTOBOULOS.

Aris. Abandon it at once, O mother. The risk
Is certain, and the gain —

Ala. More than thou think'st.
The queen hates Herod.—

Aris. But she loves not me.

Ala. But little haply. Yet with that sweet face
And lordly carriage thou mightst move her heart
More than Antonius.

Aris. That would profit much,
When 'tis through him alone we hope for good,
Through Cleopatra's aidance! To my mind,—
And so my grandsire thinks,—we are but tools
In the Egyptian's hand, to carve the work
Shall satisfy ambition or her greed.
Set me against the King, we both go down,—
At least she hopes so. I would rather stay,

Content with my high office.

Ala. For how long?

Thou art too like thy grandsire. His soft soul
Cost him a kingdom. It may cost him more ;
For neither he nor thou art truly safe
While Herod — Hush ! 'Tis Sabbion who comes.

Enter, by the door,

SABBION.

Where is the King? I would I knew the wretch
That let him in my secret!

Sab. It is like

He knows it not. Convenience or caprice
Has hasten'd his arrival by a day.
He rests him now from travel. Be ye prompt
To profit by the interval. While move
Thou and the High-priest, I shall pretext find
After his waking — Here is Æsop now.

Enter, by the door,

ÆSOP.

Will it not please thee and the prince thy son
To take your places? [*his hand on the pall.*

Ala. 'Tis a frightful way

To journey.

Aris. And appears like mocking God.

Ala. The bearers are prepar'd?

Æs. They wait without.

Ala. And know not what their service?

Æs. Nothing more

Than I was bid to tell them.

Ala. And of risk

Of stifling in the coffins there is none?

Sub. [*lifting the pall.*]

See for thyself: on every side is vent.

Not Moses in his water-box was safer.

Ala. [*going to the coffins.*]

Then, in the name of Moses' God — Thou first,

My son.

Aris. No, mother let me aid thee.

Æs. [*in alarm and
looking at the entrance.*]

Hist!

We are betray'd.

Enter HEROD

slowly past Æsop, who disappears through the door.

Her. No haply, but surpris'd;

What hast thou there, O hostess, 'neath that pall?

[*Lifts it.*]

These are well-padded coffins, and ye both

Are cloth'd as if for travel. Surely not

In such a vehicle my spouse's dam,

And her high-priestly brother meant to ride —

To Misrè, was it? now too I am come,

Expecting to be feasted? And this man,

Who is of your friends, hath he advis'd this step?

And with what purpose?

Ala. O, forgive us all!

Her. There is then something to forgive? I came
By accident, having wander'd out alone,
And found eight slaves in the dark group'd round a bier
Outside the door, and, curious to behold
Who might be dead, pass'd in, to find the living.
What has been done? What would ye do by this?
If ye would have me really to forgive,
Tell what should make it needful. No. [*To Ala.*
Speak thou,

Aristoboulos. Thou hast at the least
The ingenuousness of youth, and art a man.

Aris. Shall I speak, mother?

Ala. If thou wilt, O son,
And the King orders.

Aris. It hath irk'd her much,
And hurt our pride, O Herod, that she lives
Prison'd, as 't were, by thee, and under watch
Of all her movements. Thus my mother wrote
Plaining to Cleopatra, who advis'd
Escape to Egypt. Hence this means uncouth
To carry us to the seaside, where a troop
Of the queen's guard await us.

Her. And shall wait
Till they be weary. What! wast thou so dull
O' the sudden, O Alexandra, not to solve
What is no sphinx's riddle, though made up
Where sleeps Diospolis? The Memphian snake
Would wind her folds around thy son and me,

Hating us both, who stop her from her prey,
Which is Judea.—

Aris. So my grandsire says.

Her. So all may see. Who put thee up to this,
Who art not blind, O woman? Was it he,
Thy friend here present, hid the serpent's slime?

Ala. No, he is innocent, save to warn us now
That thou wast come.

Her. 'Tis well. I had sent him else
To carry his tongue to Memnon in his hand.
But thou! art thou bent upon thy ruin, woman?
Think'st thou beneath the shadow of Rome's power
To warm this tender sapling to a tree?
That, where my full grown stock takes up the soil?
Here cannot reign two kings, and when they strive
The weaker must go under. Measure both;
Then looking on yon coffins, think of one
That yet may be, a grander ease indeed
For the unsightly jewel of dead life,
And carried with more pomp of public state,
But not less narrow.

Ala. O my lord the King,
Judge me not harshly, for myself, or son,
For whom I crave not civil rank, content
With the high place, the highest next thy own,
Wherein thou didst instate him. Doth my lord
Forget that Mariamne is my child,
Best-lov'd of all his wives, the mother too
Of two fair sons by thee? Have I less dear

Her interest and theirs, than of my son,
Even were he made to rule, which he is not?
Not his the metal whereof kings are cast.
Gentle, inactive, easily made to bend
To his affections and to others' will,
As did and doth my sire, he would, like him,
Exchange the palace for the high-priest's house
Were they both his to choose.

Her. That facile mood

Itself is dangerous. Let you coffers speak.

Ala. My lord, thou hast heard him. What he said is true.

It irks me, and irk'd him, that I should be
Kept under such restraint. But more than this,
I doubted, even because I was restrain'd,
The King's good-will to me, and doubt grew dread,
And — Be not angry!

Her. Seem I in such mood?

Ala. My lord is gracious. At his feet this night
His slave shall bask her in his smiles, nor miss
The absent sun-light.

Her. Why not at my side?

Art thou not Alexandra? Burn those toys:
Unless thou 'ldst rather send them as they are
To Cleopatra. 'T were a goodly jest
To strangle and pack Æsop up in one,
And the Egyptian go-between in the other,
Shorn of his head and hands, to thank the queen
Silently for her lesson.

Ala. O no, no;

Let the King's mercy be not less than full.

Her. Well, I am in a happy mood to-night,
And all men shall be glad. But burn that trash,
And in its ashes let all memory sink
Of its meant use.

Ala. So shall the King be bless'd.

Let now his servant go and bid be made
Rejoicing for his coming; though more soon
Than looked for, something in the way of feast
May yet be had.

Her. Do so, our mother.

Ala. Come,

My son. [*to Aris.*

Her. No, let my brother stay: and thou, [*to Sab.*
His friend, shalt help him keep me merry. [*Exit Ala.*
So.

But hardly here. This is a sorry place,
And yon heap makes me shudder. Let us out
To the free air, my brother. The night is warm:
My train have gone to the fishponds to disport.
Shall we stroll thither?

Aris. As the King shall please.

Her. Nay, call me Herod, or brother. Thou shalt see
That I am truly such, nor shall thy mother
Have cause again to weary of restraint,
And think a mummy has more spacious room.

Sab. Had I not better go before, my lord,
And warn thy friends the King with the High-priest
Will see them swim?

Her. Do so, if thou think'st best.

We shall come after slowly. [*Exit Sab.*

Yet, methinks,

It is, my brother, an idle point of state :

We should not scare them much,— not in the dark ;

And should we join them, why, strip off our clothes,

And what are we but simple naked men ?

[*Exit leaning on Aris'. shoulder.*

SCENE III.

In the garden, near the ponds.

The imperfect darkness immediately succeeding twilight.

SABBION and two of Herod's train.

Sab. Perhaps I may share your pastime : and 'tis sure,

Should the High-priest so honor you. It is like —

'Tis very like — he will. Then have ye care

To keep him in your eyes,— to be so near,

That ye not only may increase his sport,

By all the wanton tricks his jocund age

Delights in at such times, such as — to dip

His neck of the sudden, or with hollow'd palm

Blind him with showers of spray, or, diving down,

To drag him under, as if 't were some strong fish

• Had seiz'd him by the foot ; in short, by all
 That the high sanctity of his state, subdu'd
 By his gay youth which cannot be severe,
 May render seemly ; not alone for this,
 To make him joyance, but that ye may help
 In case of danger ; for, too long below,
 His breathing might be stifled, or sharp cramps
 Fetter his motions. Yet — between us sole —
 I think I may trust ye — I am sore deceiv'd,
 If greatly it would grieve our lord the King
 The youth were fairly drown'd. It would, ye wot,
 Dam up one source of trouble, that not his throne
 Alone unsteadies, but makes Judah mourn.
 I say this, suading not to use such means
 Either for King or country, but assur'd,
 Of my own insight mark ye, that the King,
 However he might vaunt a loud lament,
 Would in his heart have solace, and own ye both
 His timely benefactors. By your looks,
 I see ye well conceive me. Ye shall have
 For your great service recompense ; say, now,
 For each one talent, with the hope of more.
 And so I release you. [*Exeunt the two.*

Thus my soul is wash'd
 Of actual murder. I may even play
 The part behooves me and make shout for help. —
 That is their step : I see them dimly now
 Dark'ning the pebbled walk. How fondly seems
 The King to lean his left hand on the shoulder

Of the boy priest, in his black heart the while
The image haply of the burial-case
Defrauded of its load, and pondering o'er
The pangs of stifling. That may bring to mind
Those worse his father suffer'd, and the help
Men say I render'd, since by my hands came
The bribe for the poison-cup. I must beware.
We may stroke the lion when tam'd, but near his mane
The jaws gape ready.

Enter HEROD and ARISTOBOULOS.

Her. Art thou here alone?
Waiting us doubtless. We are griev'd, good friend,
Or the High-priest is, thou hast stay'd thy sport
Because of either. Be the swimmers in?
Sab. All, and the water tempting-cool.

Her. So seeming
Because of the warmer air without. In fact,
The night tempts bathing.

Sab. Does my lord go in?
Her. I know not yet. That shall not keep thee back,
Aristoboulos. Thou, I know, who swimm'st
So bravely, long'st to lave thy breast, as doth
The eaglet dust-clogg'd, and with joy to float
As the proud swan to which 't is natural. Go,
Fair brother, and thy mother's friend and thine
Will go with thee, though needing not such care.
I shall here wander briefly, where the dark

And quiet favor musing. Thank thy fate
That spares thee, O brother, thoughts that wait on mine.

[*Exeunt Aris. and Sab.*]

Go join thy sire,—though, since he lacks the head,
(As I would did his widow,) thou must do all
The talk and thought for both. Brief be thy pangs.
Thy coffin this time will not need a vent,
And thy pall shall be brighter. So, good night.
Between thy life and mine,—for, with the wiles
Of that she-fox thy dam, mine were not safe,
Not truly safe a moment,—can I pause?
Or should I pause between thy good and mine?
For so 't is better, not for me alone,
But for Judea. *Wo unto the land*
That has a child for king: but tenfold wo,
When the slim hand that holds the distaff guides
The uncertain sceptre. But to me, O Lord,
Forgive this needful crime, and I will build
Thy ruin'd temple greater than before,
That pagans shall stand reverent, and the world
Own Thou art only Thou the One True God.¹⁵

The Drop falls.

ACT THE SECOND

SCENE I. *A hall in the King's house at Jerusalem.*

MARIAMNE. CLEOPATRA. ALEXANDRA.

Cle. Herod will not return. Antonius' wrath
Is hot against him for that monstrous crime
So useless, unprovok'd.

Mar. There is no proof
The crime was his, nor that there was a crime.

Ala. O no, no crime; his head was only held,
In sport, by two strong men, by Herod's men,
So long beneath the water, that, when ——

Mar. Hush!
Wouldst thou call up the horror? Sport or crime,
They underwent a like fate, on the spot,
By Herod's order.

Ala. Ay, no bubbling cry
Rose from the water to confound with fear
Of public doubt the employer, and the wage
Earn'd by the workmen was a something sav'd.

Mar. Mother! Remember I am Herod's spouse,
If my lost brother's sister. 'T is not talk,
This, for our royal guest.

Cle. Nay, 't is most fit.

Was not my counsel mother of this wo?
At least the untoward midwife that brought on
Its birth before the time? for, be thou sure
O sorrowing Mariamne, soon or late,
By some foul agent, Herod's living dread
Had found extinction.

Mar. Make me not believe —

Nay, I will not believe, such horrible guilt.
Did he not clamor loudly, after mourn
With a hush'd sorrow, and extol, by pomp
Of royal obsequy, the foremost rank
And merit of the gentle dead?

Ala. What less

Could his own self-love prompt, what else suggest
Hypocrisy, whose mood is alway one
Whate'er its object? Blatant grief or joy
Is easiest of all imitative play,
Except the drunkard's stagger, idiot smile
And stammering babble.

Mar. But my brother stood

Not in my husband's way. It steads him not.

Cle. O silly child, to whom affairs of state
Are mystery dark as is the birth of Time,
Or the great egg from whose divided shell
Came out the earth and waters. Know thou then,
Monarchs whose rights are doubtful, or whose thrones
Are built by conquest on a subject soil,
Dread popular uprising. Night and day,

It weighs, a nightmare, or it hangs, a sword,
Over their breast or head; and by their fears
They are made be tyrants, or confirm'd as such.
In the most feeble sucker of the tree
They have uprooted, and its place have fill'd
With their own stock, they see a rival growth,
And delve for its destruction. In the hive,
The queen, the moment she has found her wings,
Seeks eagerly out the cells where lodge, she knows,
Her unfledg'd rivals, waiting their full growth,
And runs her sting through all. In men the deed
We abjure as murderous; and I do the same,
Bred to the cant, nor willing to seem strange;
But not the less I tell thee, pretty love,
The act is natural.

Mar. Wouldst thou lift the bee
To the same height with man?

Cle. Not in the size
Of body or of brain. But in her acts
She shows not less of reason for her sphere,
And in her impulses is much the same.

Mar. Talk not thus, Cleopatra: man has God
To look to: and His laws——

Cle. Where found? On stone?
Think'st thou the gods be carvers?

Mar. If thou wilt,
On the heart's tablets; in the conscience, say.
Cle. That is, in reason, which self-love instructs,
And policy, which is the long-watch'd fruit

Cull'd on the growth of state occasions, sprung
By artificial culture from the seeds
Of that self-love. And hence such laws but sway
Whenever and wherever they subserve
Or help maintain the interests of rule,
But found in conflict are soon set aside.

Mar. Alas, if so it is! Why then condemn
King Herod, and incite against his act,
If 't was his act, thy husband? Is it then
Self-interest thou consultest?

Cle. O the gods!
Canst thou not see a difference, when I sit
In judgment as it were, and when I place
My conscience in another's breast and find
His secret motives? She is but a child,
O Alexandra, still, though mother now
Of two upgrowing sons. Ere they are men,
She will have learn'd to look with steadier eyes
On tragedies of state, nor wet their lids
Even at a brother's drowning.

Mar. O my heart!
Be this the fruit age ripens? Happier he,
The innocent boy, than to have gather'd such
From the false tree of knowledge. May I lie
Where he lieth ere I taste it, as at times
I have wish'd I lay, perhaps at peace forever
As thought our sires.¹⁶

Cle. And thyself may'st prove
O'er soon. The lion has lapp'd kindred blood,

Nor will his flesh'd fangs stop at thee. That look
Of scorn becomes thee, but it shows thou lack'st
A knowledge of the heart. The habit's force
Is life of all our conduct, right or wrong.
One step leads to another, and the thirst
And hunger after sin its feeding follows
As duly as the appetite for food
Or drowsiness, when comes the hour again
At which, before, we slumber'd and we ate.
Thou art beautiful, and Herod loves thee well:
But Herod is a soldier, and as king
Tyrannical and bloody; in his mood
A hurricane, which rises ere thou seest
The darkening of the sun, and in its sweep
Carries all things before it, sticks and straws
And the small sand, as well as sturdy trees.
If thou fear'st not its rising, why so sad?
Thou art not happy, nor thy mother safe.
Hath he not set his uncle o'er you both?
Doth not his sister hate you?

Mar. Who told that?

Cle. Thy mother.

Mar. She doth wrong, both to herself
And me.

Cle. No, she doth right. She knows
I am her true friend, and thus friend to thee.
If futile was my counsel, its result
Fatal perhaps, must it be alway so?

Ala. No, thou art wiser than us both. On thee

Weighs not the burden of her brother's death,
 And to thee only stretch our hands for aid
 And ultimate rescue. Stop me not, my child;
 Not yet Antonius' spouse knows all our grief.
 The clouds are gathering o'er us. Let us build
 An ark on Ararat, ere down the rain
 Descend in torrents and the surging flood
 Whelm thee and me, and with us both thy sons.

Cle. What wouldst thou?

Ala. Aided by Salome's arts,
 Herod's first-born steps nearer day by day
 To the throne's heritage; and Herod's mind,
 Suspicious at all times, warps by the heat
 Of his malignant influence more and more.
 Thus, with her beauty and her serpent's-guile,
 Neither enfeebled, Doris is come back
 To share her son's advantage, to estrange
 Herod from Mariamne —

Mar. Let her, may that be.
 Who but a fool would pine the loss of love
 That was so prompt to change? But Herod's heart
 Is mine, and will be; and dark Doris' place
 Is with his other wives,¹⁷ mere things of state,
 Or sensual minions of a transient whim,
 Where is no real passion.

Cle. Be not sure.

All love is sensual, more or less; and hearts
 Are won by blandishments and wiles that take
 Man's self-love captive, oftener than by charm.

Of actual beauty or the soul's best grace,
Which sometimes even repulse, where pride like thine
Seems to demand submission as their right,
Not to be won by conquest and long pain.
I have seen and know this Doris. Have a care:
She was his first love; and the heart returns,
Or senses wilt thou, willingly to the call
Of former pleasure. — What wouldst thou have said,
O Alexandra?

Ala. Little not forestall'd
By thy perceptive wisdom. Doris' son,
Shrewd and ambitious, by Salome's aid
(Who serves him not of love) strows far and wide
The seeds of calumny, that the fruit, brought back
By foreign hands, may poison Herod's mind
With doubts, not only of my daughter's sons
And me, but of their mother's self.—

Mar. Not so.

Doubts cannot live between the King and me
Who give them nought to feed on.

Cle. Air will do.

The serpent jealousy will famish not,
Depriv'd of solid food. If thou art strong
In Herod's heart, why is thy cheek pale now?
Thou doubt'st, thyself. And thou hast cause. Behold,
He hath confin'd thy mother, slain her son,
Calls back the rival who because of thee
Was exil'd from the Court, and sets her son
Above thy nobler children. Is that love?

I would not share the passion of my spouse
With other women. Nay, I tell thee this :
Did Marcus use me as thy lord doth thee,
I 'd poison him to-morrow — or myself.

Mar. No.

Cle. Would I not? Mark thou this largest ring.
'Tis not for show, but need. I 'll give it thee.
This pin, thus press'd, observe, starts up the stone.
Note the white dust beneath. It is so small
Thou canst conceal it 'neath thy finger-nail.
Or, lift the ring to thy mouth : 't is better so,
The gem upsprung. The effect is found at once.

Mar. What?

Cle. Death, be sure.

Mar. I'll none of it.

Cle. Nay, take,

Wear it for an emergence that may come.
But thou 'lt do better than upon thyself
To use my jewel.

Mar. Crush it 'neath thy heel,
Or keep it for thy use. How have I sinn'd
To appear to thee a murderess?

Cle. Said I well,

She is yet a child?

Ala. Nay, mind her not, O Queen.
Give me the ring. I'll wear it for thy sake,
And — not mistake thy meaning. [*significantly, as
she puts on the ring.*]

Enter Mariamne's sons,

ALEXANDER *and* ARISTOBOULOS,

Ah, my boys.

Come ye to bid farewell to our royal guest?

Alex. No, grandmother : the Queen will now go home

Under my father's escort. He is near.

Mar. Near! near! How near?

Alex. Within a half-hour's ride.

We are going now to meet him.

Mar. [*embracing one after
the other.*]

O my sons!

I knew the Heaven was just.

Ala. Whence had ye this?

Why wrote he not?

Cle. He would take you by surprise.

Mar. He would not stop to write. I knew he'd come!

He hath proven his innocence. [*again caressing the youths.*]

Cle. Hath found at least

A way to appease my Roman. But these boys,

How proud should be their sire. They are almost men.

Thou, Alexander, [*caressing with her hand.*]

art well nigh as tall

As thy half-brother, but art not so false,

I hope, as he.

Alex. I am not false at all.

We are Mariamne's children, who has train'd

Both of us to be true,— as fits, she saith,

The sons of kings and men of valiant race.

Cle. All which is noble, but, my prince, unwise.
(Suffer me, Mariamne.) When with men
Ye have to deal who open not their thoughts,
While ye bare yours, it is as if ye fought
With naked breast against a foe well-arm'd.
Learn to dissemble. 'Tis the art of kings.
Antipater is wise, is brave, is false.
Be ye as brave and wise as he, yet true,
Ye must go down before him, for ye tell
Your purpose and he meets it, while his own,
Knowing it not, ye cannot override.

Aristo. Is that thy counsel?

Cle. No, 't was given of old,
Or something like it, in your Jacob's time,
Who overreach'd his brother, and by fraud
Forestall'd his father's blessing.

Aristo. By a lie,
By a mean juggle. I would rather be
As Esau, who I have always felt was wrong'd
And lov'd as honest, than the coward knave
Who cheated while he fear'd him.

Cle. Yet he won
His father's blessing, and your race of Jews
Are proud to be his children.

Aristo. No, not all.
I am not, nor is Alexander here.
Though not so hot as I, his soul like mine
Scorns subterfuge and loathes deception's craft,

As fit for women only.

Mar. Fit for some.

All are not like Rebekah.

Aristo. No, not thou.

'Twas at thy feet we learn'd to weep with Esau,
Grand and forgiving, generous and brave,
Whose hands were shaggy, but whose heart was soft
As is a child's, and flush with hate of him
Who at their birth laid hold upon his heel,
And when he grew, supplanted him.

Cle. As ye

Must do your Esau. Ye are nobler born.

Alex. By the mother only, and it is, with us,
Our elder who is Jacob. Let him be.
Our father came of Edom; and the blood
Of him who stood on the other side o' the ford
Of Jabbok, and his cringing womb-mate's guile
Might have aveng'd, but did not, and went back
Lord of his wrath to Seir, in soul a king,
Seems quite as ruddy to us both as his
Who wrestled with the angel in a dream,
And by his shrunk thigh cost us waste of meat
Down to this day.¹⁸ Now take we leave, O Queen :
Our father must not miss us. [*Exit with Aristo.*

Cle. King-like both,

And full of mettle.

Ala. By their mother spoil'd,
Who will forget the Maccabees.

Mar. Not I;

Nor that my lord, whose Idumean blood
Is valiant as Matthias', or his sons',
Is master of his will, and may exalt,
To follow him, who is fit. Let me too leave,
O Cleopatra: I must be at hand
To welcome him. [*Exit.*]

Cle. Did I not truly say,
She is yet a child? But if her sons are hers,
They are thy grandsons, and their kingly rights
Shall not be peril'd. Where is Doris now?
Something may there be done, and with her son,
To check his false aspiring and give rest
To that good heart.

Ala. Ah, Heaven knows my heart,
Like thine, O Cleopatra, pants for peace,
And the good only, by all righteous means,
Of all men, even my foes. Of course, the wrath
Of the Triumvir will appal them both.
Cle. I shall well use its terrors, be thou sure.
Ala. I call the eunuch now to show the way.

[*As she claps her hands, Scene changes.*]

SCENE II.

A chamber in Doris' Apartment.

ANTIPATER. DORIS.

Antip. Keep me not longer, mother; my sire may come
Sooner than look'd for, and my brothers get
The advance of me.

Do. Fear not for that. Thou art set
Too deep in the King's favor. One word more:
Pay court to Cleopatra. Thou art large,
Well knit and handsome, of that kind of men
Which queens like her affect. Thou mayst do much,
As she can all with Antonius, on whose will
Was thy sire's sceptre grafted.

Antip. In my hand
'T would prove a barren reed, even should I grasp it,
Did I the Roman cross by even a look
He might con falsely. Cleopatra's love
Would bring me ruin.

Do. Thou dost misconceive.
I had no thought of love. That were indeed
To attempt to climb up backward. Foolish boy,
Or vain, thou couldst not win that woman's heart,
Even didst thou love her. But thou mayst assail

The weak walls of her vanity. Make her think
 She hath won thee, and thou winn'st the grace that springs
 From her triumphant self-love. Thou art bold,
 Fair-spoken ; and — What now ? Why, she is here !
[*low.*

Enter CLEOPATRA.

Do. This honor, Queen of Egypt —

Cle. Nay, I come

To do thee service simply, or thy son.
 Let me adjure him not to trust too far
 The specious mood of Mariamne's sons.
 All is not false that's hidden, nor are truth
 And honor alway servants of the bold,
 Out-spoken and hot-blooded. Be forewarn'd.
 Under the outward habit of a mien
 Lofty and fiery, sometimes work low craft,
 Falsehood and treachery. Vain of their high blood;
 And made to think that through their mother's side
 Their right is better to the throne than thine
 Who art the first-born, they would play tow'rd thee
 The part of ancient Jacob. Be to them
 Not thou as simple Esau, but their craft
 Meet with superior cunning. Wilt thou so ?

Antip. I will do all thou 'dst have me do, O Queen,
 Who art renown'd not less for subtle lore
 Than beauty, — in both peerless.

Cle. Sayst thou so ?

Thou hast tak'n to flattery early. I knew not

Thou wast so well-grown. Let me look at thee.
In sooth, thou art not amiss. I must have care
How we consort. One day, thou wilt become
The royal fillet well. But thou art wrong:
I am not subtle, Antipater, but, thou seest,
Am one of the open-speaking, of that kind
Who are true as well as open, and, where pleas'd,
Love to commend. We shall be friends. Hark there!
The King is come. Thou shalt go to him. But first,
Return me to the hall, and let him know
I wait him there. [*She puts her hand into his, in a
seductive way, and he leads her out,
exchanging, as he does so, a glance
with Doris.*]

Do. Ah serpent! But thy guile
Secures, not loses Eden. He shall eat
Of the fruit thou profferest, and grow wise; too wise
To be thy servant, as thou mean'st. His heel
Will bruise, I trust, thy head, and thou thy folds
And painted slough drag helpless in the dust.
[*Turns to depart, as Scene changes.*]

SCENE III.

As in Scene I. of the Act.

Enter

CLEOPATRA, *conducted by* ANTIPATER,
who, about to leave, kisses the hand
he still holds.

Cle. There : go. I shall make something of thee yet.

[Exit Antip.]

But not what thou supposest. Why, poor child,
Antonius would devour thee at a gulp !
But thou wilt prop my lever, help distract
And weaken Herod, and his sceptre break,
To join again in my hand, and be one
With that of Egypt, as 't is meet it should,
And as, belike, it was in the hoar old time.
And then, Arabia added ——

Let me think.

Herod is amorous. To ensnare his heart
Would blind him to my aim. 'T were something too,
To estrange him from his last wife. Flaunting growth
Of a plant of yesterday, with airs of state
That were extravagant in the loftiest queen
Of the primeval Pharaohs, she makes vaunt

Of truth and righteousness, and looks down on me
As if I were of coarser clay. Perhaps
I am rated too less beautiful! We shall see.
But, to secure all Syria, or at least
This part thereof, or make Arabia mine,
If one or both, I must the king of each
Set on the other; and whether Herod win,
Or Malichus, is all one: in either case
The conquer'd realm is mine, in part, or all.
If both should fall exhausted, better still.
Or if, in Herod's absence, this great boy,
Who seeks to pay me court, were made to play
The Absalom to his sire — But David comes.
A stately presence, and a martial build:

*Enter, from above, HEROD,
attended by certain of his suite, who remain
at the entrance while he comes down.*

So, fitter prize, and easier to be won.

Her. Hail; and I trust thou 'rt well. I lose no time
To render homage to the illustrious queen,
Who is also queen of beauty and the spouse
Of my great lord Antonius. For this honor
Vouchsaf'd Judea thanks, and be thou welcome.

Cle. Nay, rather say farewell. I have staid more long
Than I had meant, to see thee and give joy
Of thy release, which I was sure must come
From that unrighteous charge.

Her. I had suppos'd

Egypt believ'd my guilt, and that her voice
Was constant for my censure.

Cle. I? My voice
'Tis like help'd thy acquittal. Am I less
A friend of right, that I am held a friend
Of Mariamne's mother? Had the act
Been even a murder, though to be deplor'd,
Yet there are sometimes pressing needs of state
To justify men's slaughter; and, a queen,
And doing what I have been oblig'd to do,
I could not have condemn'd it. Men like thee
Are born for absolute rule, and the high gods
Prosper in them what dar'd by meaner hands
They punish as misdeeds. Before I go,
Can I not serve thee with my lord? Thy arm
Is not demanded in the Roman war;
But thou canst stretch it o'er Arabia. There
Thy valor and wise conduct will have scope
And victory is certain. In the spoil
Look thou I have my share. Dost thou not want
To farm of me, besides the vale of palms,
Hippos and Gad'ara and the seaside towns
That are my portion? ¹⁹

Her. Gladly should I hire.
What are they worth?

Cle. Say thou.

Her. Together, then,
Seven score and ten gold talents by the year.

Cle. Fy, that is little. Add a score and five.

Her. Well, be it so. I 'll take them at that rate.

Cle. But stay, I was hasty ; thou must bid more high.
Two hundred talents say, and they are thine.
Come, thou art liberal always.

Her. To my cost ;
Which keeps me straiten'd. But to please the queen,
Whom I would gladly serve, I'll take the towns
To farm at her own value and be prompt
In payment as before.

Cle. And punish thou
The Arab king, who is not. Wilt thou so ?
Her. To my best faculty. Though, 't would please me more
Antonius would permit me swell his strength
In his expected conflict.

Cle. That must come
Where thou couldst yield small service. When its shock
Is over, and the conqueror, my lord,
As he must conquer, no more halves the world,
Herod shall be remember'd, and the deeds
He prays to do be set down as if done.—
Remains now that we part. [*Extends her hand.*]

Her. No, not to-day.
I would escort thee, as befits thyself,
And as, for thy sake and my lord's thy spouse,
Befitteth me. To-day I am fatig'd,
And, hasting as my duty bade, to thee,
Have pass'd even Mariamne at the gate
Almost without a word. And then, fair queen,
I would not have thee leave us save with gifts

Worthy of both, and worthy of my debt
 To thy lord's benefactions. Let it be
 To-morrow, O Cleopatra, or the day
 Succeeding that.

Cle. To-morrow be it then.

We who are wedded own but half our will;
 The other is our partner's. Thus my soul
 Pants for its absent half, as doth thy own.
 How happy must she be who shares thy soul
 To be so lov'd, of such a man as thou!
 Minds are not always lodg'd in forms to match;
 But thou art large as Marcus, and thy brows,
 Like Ammon's, bear in them the word of fate
 To shivering mortals. Thou art all a man.
 How she must love thee! Dost thou think she does?

Her. I hope so, and am vain to think it so.

Cle. No, no, not vain. I am sure, were I as she,
 I should so love thee! Art thou very sure?
 Well, well. But art thou sure? She seems so cold,
 And is so haughty.

Her. She is not to me.

I deem she loves me well.

Cle. Well, she may well.

And thou, dost thou love her in turn? [*puts her hand*
over his.] In truth?

In very truth?

Her. In truth, I think I do.

Cle. Now, could I envy her. Should Antonius die——

Let us go in. I have kept thee here too long
From love and Mariamne. Happy she!

*Exeunt, as
the Drop falls.*

ACT THE THIRD

SCENE I. *A large room of Herod's private apartment.*

HEROD. SALOME.

Salo. How long wilt thou endure?

Her. Till I have proof.

Salo. Thou hast a mountain of it. Is it like,
The old Hyrcanus, now past eighty years,
Weak too and gentle, easily led by those
Who affect to serve him, or who feed his ears —

Her. He has lost them.

Salo. Happily. That unfits his brow
For the tiara, not the purple bend²⁰
(Mark that), nor takes away the power to hear
Laud of the past sung out of hate to thee.
Would he, I say, being such, so tame, so old,
Move but for Alexandra?

Her. And I ask

Where swells thy mountain. Is 't too vast to see?
While life is left to her, that woman's brain
Will procreate mischief. This to think, to know,
Is not to see the birth.

Salo. Wouldst thou wait that?
To crush the mother ere the brood come out
Is safer and completer.

Her. More complete,
But safer not. Forget 'st thou who she is?
Salo. His daughter, and the mother of that youth
Whose death made Herod's profit, as would his;
Mother of Herod's wife, whose haughty soul
She warps to her own black humor.

Her. Art thou mad?
Or am I made of patience, that thou dar'st ——
Salo. Well, thou wilt learn one day. The wilful blind ——
Her. Silence, Salome. And in time; here comes
My faithful agent.

Enter, on the right, SABBION.

Salo. Faithful?

Her. Hush! nor think
Thou only hast perception. [*Exit Salo. at the left,*
as Sab. advances.

Welcome back,
O Sabbion, friend! Thou comest on my sight
As morn to the tired watcher. And the dawn

Glows with the fore-light of a sunny day.

So speak thy beaming features. Is't not so?

Sab. That, as my lord shall find it.

Her. Well, well; speak.

The letter which thou shew'dst me, from the hand
Of old Hyrcanns, given to thy trust
By Alexandra, who, Salome thinks,
Was its true author —

Sab. Doubt it not, my lord.

'Tis the old mummy project schem'd again,
With change of route and transport.

Her. And the goal

May prove the same, without the symbol coffin.
Thou mightst have been an augur, bred in Rome,
And shalt be here a prophet. Well, the letter?

Sab. I gave the missive to the Arabian prince,
Who read it satisfy'd, and sends this back.

Her. This will not need resealing like the first.

[Opens it and reads to himself.]

It shall to the Sanhedrim, who are meeting now,
Call'd for this juncture. Thou too must be there,
To bear me witness.

Sab. May I ask the King,

What says the rescript?

Her. Alexandra's sire

Ask'd for strong escort to the Asphaltic Lake.
The governor accords it. That is all;
With welcome and safe bidding. Thus thou seest
Hyrcanus meant escape. From what? for what?

The old vulture scents disaster on the breeze
That blows from Actium, and his female brood
Wets her strong beak for carnage that shall come,
She hopes, of it here. It is a stupid bird.
The blood of Herod, which the Lord hath spar'd
So often in worse danger, ²¹ shall not smear
Her bald neck; and her rough wings flap in vain.
But the mere thought is treason, is it not?

Sab. My lord, it is. Thy hands there hold the proof.

Her. What should be done to those who treason plot,
Or practice it suggested?

Sab. What is done

To save assaulted life: life answers life:
And kings and nations threaten'd have more cause
For violent defence than have mere men
Single and subject.

Her. Even so. Bid call

The captain of the guard. And be thou mute
As thou art wise. Then go recruit with food
And change of dress; there is not time to bathe.
We owe thee. Multiply one hundred fold
The cost of thy hard travel made for us,
Then come upon the treasury; to-morrow,
Thou shalt receive the order: until when
Our heartfelt thanks. [*Exit Sab. at the right.*

Belooves me to have care.

I too presage disaster. Woman-led,
Antonius may go down; and with him fall
Those who have stood by him. Well is 't for me,

False Egypt for her own aims shuts me out
From the great battle. This improves my chance.
Octavius was more kind to me in Rome
Than Marcus' self. His more sagacious brain
Renders him apt for reasons I can give
Why he should be my friend. But till that come,
And in my absence — Ay, Ilyreanus' death
Alone can make me safe. Thus snaps the last
Of Alexandra's tools. I would the hand
That us'd them could be broken too, as now
Salome counsel'd. But Salome hints
Evil of Mariamne. 'T is her spite.
She hates the stock that lifts its older growth
More stately than our own. I hate it too.
Should my hopes fail me,— should Antonius fall,
And the blood-heated victor sweep away
All that the vanquish'd builded,— they shall not
Sing triumph o'er my funeral: with one blow —
I hear my captain's tread. Of will or force,
Thou goest to the judgment, grandsire.

aloud.] So; come in.

As he calls out this, turning to the right,

Scene changes.

SCENE II.

A room in Mariamne's Apartment.

MARIAMNE. ALEXANDER. ARISTOBOULOS.

Aristo. Mother, I try to think well of our sire,
For thy sake as our own; but when the light
Of his grand deeds and of his puissant²² mind,
The splendor of his bold designs, whose scope
Should be an empire, yet whose costly taste
Makes Israel weep, when this the King's broad light
Of glory dazzles me, there comes a chill,
And darkness, and the thunder-roar, the palm
With all her fruits lies prostrate and the ground
Is riven, and seam'd by torrents; and in this
I see the man, my father. What had done
Those poor fanatics, that our father, sick,
Should rise from his suffering, not with pitiful heart
And grateful for recovery, but in rage,
And order them to a frightful instant death,—
To be burn'd alive; full forty brave young men,
With their two leaders? ²³ what, but follow out
The law and the prophets, better than himself?
When from the temple's porch they hew'd the bird,
They did but foolishly, fired with boyish zeal;
And their inciters, teachers wise in law,

Alone should have been punish'd.

Mar. Softly, son.

Thy father was too passionate ; 't is his fault ;
The punishment too sweeping and severe —

Alex. O mother, do not qualify the act.

'T was what my brother calls it, and were so
Had but the head men suffer'd. Thou, wast thou
Queen of Judea, would not so have done.

Mar. I am a woman, nor am plac'd as he.

Thy sire owes all to Rome. His many foes
Have taunted, and still taunt him, as in birth .
But half a Jew : ²⁴ he is scarce that in soul,
And fain would force his people o'er the bounds
He thinks belittle them. Lo, the heathen games,
The hippodrome, the theatre. Did all
The popular tumult make him take away
The trophies that adorn'd this ?

Aristo. Ah, my mother
Thou wak'st a frightful memory. What rage !
What merciless massacre ! These are cruel acts
That have no exculpation.²⁵ Kingly pride
Should not be so aveng'd, and kingly fears
That prompt to cruelty but create again
Themselves in its excesses. When the bend
Adorns Antipater's brow, I hope his throne
Will not be propp'd on human skulls, nor fume
Of roasting children lift its horrid stench
Around it, to the Moloch of revenge.

Alex. But why Antipater ? We are better fit

Than Doris' son to reign.

Mar. More fit, I hope,
And think ; for ye have candor, and large hearts,
And fiery hate of wrong, which gives me joy
Yet frightens me.—

Alex. And yet it comes of thee.

Mar. That is my joy, my sons, my good, brave sons,—
That ye have ta'en from me what is in me
Most good. But with it ye have drawn the ill
Of rashness and too fierce and bold a pride :
And that affrights me, for your sakes. I fear,
Often I fear, ye will not live to grace
The sceptre of my House, even should your sire
For my sake set aside the earlier right
Of your half-brother, who is able too
And manlike, but I judge without your truth
And openness of dealing. In this world,
At least in this day, Truth goes to the wall,
While Craft and Doubledealing, laurel-crown'd,
Drive their triumphal chariot four-abreast
O'er Fortune's highway.

Alex. So the Egyptian urg'd.
But, driven to the wall, Truth need not crouch,
Nor skulk in its shadow. We shall stand upright',
Safe in our conscience, and trust God and thee.

[*Mar. presses him to her breast.*]

Aristo. Yes, hug him, mother. Alexander thinks
All he has said. But why those tears that stand
In thy large eyes, O beautiful mother and good?

And now they fall! No, do not weep! do not!

[*Kisses her on the eyelids.*]

Mar. Let me. It is not often that they flow.

I weep with mingled sorrow and joy, in fear
That is delight. O my heart's pride! my boys!
Whom God hath crown'd as kings, albeit the band
Of human empire never press the locks
Of either of you; be for my sake, mine,
Less rash in speech, less hasty to resent.
Your bark is in a dangerous sea, whose roar
On the sunk rocks sounds ever in my ears.
Be resolute, be men; but trust not all
To boldness. Even with an open sky
And breezes gentle, often goes the keel
To wreck in the wild breakers. — What is now?

Enter hurriedly, and with looks of alarm,

ALEXANDRA.

Aristo. [*to Alex.*] Our prow, I fear, is on the rocks already.

Ala. That demon Herod! Thy grandsire, O my child,
Is seiz'd. —

Mar. Seiz'd!

Ala. Even now I saw him led
Under a guard to the Council, which has met
In the great hall.

Mar. What hath he done?

Ala. What done?

What is he, ask. He is the last male left

Of the royal house thy husband hates and fears,

Mar. It will be soon extinct. What can he fear?

Thy father is now standing on the grave.

Why should he push him in?

Ala. Because himself

May fill it first. Know thou, the news is come,

Though not confirm'd, Antonius has lost all

In a great sea-fight. Herod fears the event

May rouse to tumult, and the people place

The old man over them.

Aristo. That they could not do.

He is too gentle and yielding. What when young

He put aside, is 't like now in old age,

So old as his, he would risk more than life,

His people's weal, to gain?

Mar. It is some plot.

I hope, my mother, thou hast not ——

Ala. What should I?

Is 't I made Herod cruel? Hath he not

Murder'd already my sole son, the best

And loveliest of youths?

Mar. Be hush'd; at least,

Before the sons of Herod; even were there proof,

As there is none, of so atrocious guilt.

But thou, thou didst with strange device, before,

Tempt the King's anger,— hast thou not now plann'd

Some scheme, wherein my grandsire is involv'd,

Offensive to the King? He is too old,

And gentle, reverend man, to practice aught

Of his own motion ; but the lightest breath
Of artful suasion bends him like a reed.

Ala. What should I plan, my daughter ? Is he not
My father as thy grandsire ? Know I not
The royal wrath how deadly ? But I know
The King's suspicions also, and his hate
Cruel as death. The earthquake, that late rag'd,²⁶
Is not more fearful ; for, like it, none knows
Where will the shock be, or beneath whose walls
The ground may open. Wives, and sons, and friends,
All tremble at his roaring, and with cause :
The blood he tastes sates not the king of beasts,
But makes him more rapacious for new prey.
Frown not. Thou 'lt see how this will end. 'T will be
No murder, no ; as with my gentle son,
Who was not drown'd, but only lost his breath
Under smooth water. So the King gets rid
Of both his possible rivals. Be thou warn'd :
Our turn may come the next. [*Exit.*

Mar. I fear, my sons,
Your sire may be more cruel than I thought.
But let us not distrust. Is not this case
Before the Sanhedrim, without whose voice
Death cannot be decreed ? All will be well.
Go now. Inquire, and gather what you can :
But go not to the Hall, lest the King's wrath
Turn on ye, and yourselves forget his due.

[*Exeunt Aristo. and Alex.*

God of my sires ! God of this blood-stain'd land !

Spread thy wings o'er us, o'er my sons, my mother.
 I have try'd to inspire them, for their father's sake,
 With hope, but on this heart weigh leaden doubt
 And cold distrust. O turn them not to hate!
 He is my spouse, the father of my boys.
 Give me to feel that still, and both our hearts,
 Mine which is laughty, and his, make Thou more calm!

Scene changes.

SCENE III.

The Hall of the Throne.

HEROD, *seated.*

*Behind the throne, standing, Guards in full armor,
 with bucklers and long spears.*

*On either side, seated, the members of the Sanhedrim;
 among whom, and nearest to Herod, SIMEON.*

Midway, facing the throne,

HYRCANUS, *with the Captain of the Guard on
 his left; and on his right, but somewhat removed, SABBION.*

Her. That I have taken this step, rest ye assur'd
 Comes of no light incentive. Know I not
 What ag'd Hyrcanus is? his lofty claim,

By the just awe of birth and once-high place,
 To our joint reverence? Can I well forget
 His royal blood flows by two kindred streams
 In my wife's veins and joins mine in her sons? ²⁷
 I thus, of natural pride, and by the tie
 Of ancient obligation,—for all know,
 One of you well, how once Hyrcanus lov'd
 And favor'd Herod,—I thus am minded more
 To cloak his errors, than to set them bare
 Before your judgments. But the realm's best weal,
 The safety of my function, of myself,
 In this so critical juncture, when the clash
 Of kindred Roman arms re-echoes here,
 Sounding to similar strife and civil war,
 Are too imperious, that the inward voice
 Of private feeling and domestic claim
 Should more than whisper. Treason in our midst —

Hyr. Treason?

Her. Ay, treason, treason in high place,—
 Calls for prompt punishment; and I, Herod King,
 Denounce for this, before your reverend court,
 Hyrcanus present.

Sim. On what charge?

Her. On this,
 That he hath correspondence, interchange
 Of counsel and of presents with the foe,
 The ethnarch of Arabia, whom our arms,
 Favor'd by Rome, have forc'd to timorous peace,
 And render'd tributary.²⁸

Sim. And to this grave charge

What pleads the high accus'd?

Hyr. I might make plea

By replication of the King's own thought;
 But it would shame me, to ungrateful ears
 To chant my acts of kindness. Have I lov'd him;
 Did I, when, summon'd to a court like this,
 He durst come arm'd, assist him to escape,
 Though Shetach's son, whom sole of all that court,
 So outrag'd, hath this Herod left alive,²⁹
 Himself dissuaded, warning what now comes;
 Was 't I who, ask'd who fittest was to rule,
 Told the Triumvir it was Herod here,³⁰
 Though to my own wrong who, by Julius' act,
 Was ethnarch then, as well as priest supreme,
 And born a king; did I do this,—so speak,—
 So testify to his power,—while yet strong,
 Would I, now stepp'd a half-score years beyond
 The common goal of life, without as then
 Power or treasure, and having now no race
 To inherit from me, but whose blood is merg'd
 In Herod's own, conspire against his rule?
 Treason? In me? My top is white as Hermon's,
 My stock is not the never-fading tree
 Of Lebanon, and from it spreads no more
 A branch direct: a few brief years at most
 And ye will lay me where no dreams of pomp
 Make restless human vanity. What then
 Have I to hope from treason?

Her. Hope alone

Not always prompts to change, and traitors toil
Often for others' ends, when too the pile
They underdig is their own house of stone,
And its down toppling, if it crash them not,
Yet leaves them homeless. Is Hyrcanns old,
Others are not so; has he lov'd me, love
Is prone to jealousy, distrust and fear,
Nor does it not know anger. Younger brains
Have woven for him, shooting through their warp
His shuttle of distrust; but not the less
The work is treason, and the web is his.

Hyr. Distrust? I might make answer, show'd I such
When from my Parthian refuge Herod's voice
Entic'd me hither? ³¹ But all this is vain,
Both charge and answer: let the King give proof.

Her. Behold, [*extending the Arabian letter to Simeon.*

Sim. [*his eyes on the missive.*

This letter answers to one sent
Seemingly by Hyrcanns, and accords
Arm'd conduct to the Salt Sea shore as ask'd.

Hyr. For what?

Sim. It is not said.

Hyr. Escape at most.

Implies that treason?

Her. It implies mistrust,
Which thou hast just deny'd. Escape from what?
The innocent dread not danger. Thou hast done,
Or wouldst do, whether of thyself, or push'd

By others craftier, what endangers peace
And menaces the throne. Was 't not for this
That Alexander's widow plotted flight,
Dragging her son the High-priest to that pit
Where now her father stumbles?

Hyr. 'T is a plot
Against my life's poor remnant, or a fraud
Inspir'd by jealousy to elicit facts
To justify suspicion. Who shall say
That missive is not forg'd? If meant for me,
How came it to the King's hands?

Her. Ask of him
Who brought it and denounc'd thee. There he stands.
Hyr. He? Sabbion? Hear, friends! all that in this court
Love honor and hate treason. This same man
Told Alexandra that her son was drown'd
By Herod's order, and that he himself
Strove hard to save him.

Her. Did he so? 'Tis like.
Now, by my father's ghost, who drank his death
At thy cupbearer's hand, suborn'd by him
That double traitor, he shall fare like thee.
Take them to instant death!

Sab. My lord! —

Her. Speak not.
Hadst thou a hundred necks, they all should bleed.
Sim. But suffer me, O King. The Sanhedrim
Are here for council, met at thy request.
By their advice alone, can death be given.

Her. What! in a case of treason? where the crime
Is done against myself? Guards! bear them off.

Sim. But yet one word, O King. Hyrcanus' life
Is counting its last drops. The measur'd glass
That drips so fast, let its thin, threadlike stream
Pour downward in a prison, nor thy fame
Smirch with thy wife's —

Her. No more. I owe thee much;³²
Nor have I been ungrateful. But thy hand
Beware thou thrust not in the lion's mouth
When open'd on his prey. Guards, to the front.
The assembly is dissolv'd. No pause give either:
Off with their heads. So is my sire aveng'd.

*HEROD now standing up, his right
arm stretched out to the front, his right foot ad-
vanced, while the left, set backward, rests upon the toe,
the Sanhedrim have likewise risen.*

*Part of the Guard have,
at a signal from the Captain, sur-
rounded HYRCANUS and SABBION. The rest
moving downward, take their place on either side
in front of the Council, and salute with their spears the
King, as he descends from the throne:
and the*

Drop falls.

ACT THE FOURTH

SCENE I. *A sitting-room in Mariamne's Apartment.*

HEROD. MARIAMNE.

Mar. No, didst thou love me, love me with thy soul,
Thou hadst not done it. My grandsire, old and weak,
So old, so very weak, so good and kind,
Who was his own way creeping to the grave,
Thou might'st have spar'd him, were it for my sake.
Thine is not true love. No, embrace me not:
Thou smell'st of murder.

Her. Mariamne! Ah,
Too well thou know'st I love thee, or thy lips
Would not so dare asperse me. Murder? Take
That insult to thy mother. On her head
Rests the crime's blood-stain, if there was a crime.
Am I the only king who must not guard
My throne from treason, nor my palace walls
Rid of the vermin foe that grub therein,
Because their gnawing breaks not my wife's rest
Nor wakes her sense of danger?

Mar. And because
(Give thy whole thought its breath,) because the wife
Shares the rats' blood nor can be made to think
Their narrow teeth not harmless.

Her. Thou, not I,
Have said it. I had not a thought, could not
Saving in folly have such, that thy race
Valiant and royal were a vermin brood.

Mar. It irks not, if thou hadst. Hyrcanus' blood
Had form'd a river, rolling to the sea,
While yet Antipater's was a petty rill.

Her. This is too — But it shall be borne from thee :
And thou art wild with grief. That haughty ire
Adds to thy beauty, and those scornful eyes
That lighten through still rain, thy upturn'd lip
And nostrils' higher curve, thy throat's swell'd arch
And thy cheeks deepen'd red, all make me more
Thy patient slave than ever. O my spouse,
Lov'd mother of my sons, forgive my act.
'Twas not in hate of thee.

Mar. No, nor that act
(Men say 't was thine) that took my brother off,
Another of the vermin whose small life
Troubles the lord of palaces, and makes,
Through divers traps, the dark pool and the axe
Helps to his sceptre.

Her. Now, by Judah's God —
Thou dost not tremble ! 'Tis thy pride, or wrath,
Or knowledge of my love's depth, makes thee bold
To face me in this temper. None but thee
Had dar'd it. Go ; go, ere it be too late.
Thou art beside thyself, and I forgive.

Mar. Forgive ? 'Tis I may say that word, not thou.

I go, but less in anger than in grief.
 The breach thy crime has made between our hearts
 Will not soon narrow. Till its gap is clos'd,
 Mine will not bound to meet thine as of old.

[*Exit, at right.*]

Her. Ungrateful! And for this —

Enter JOSEPH, from the left.

Thou com'st in time.
 I would not be alone; not now. [*Walking up and down*
with discomposure.]

Jo. I fear'd to come
 Up to the women's rooms. But thou so bad 'st,
 The slave said.

Her. Even so. I had the thought,
 In giving Mariamne to thy charge,
 Which I must do, —

Jo. Go'st thou from us again?

Her. —I thought to do 't before her, for her sake
 And in her honor: but thou seest, O uncle,
 How I am ruffled. Mariamne's pride —
 Ah, well she knows my weakness and her power.
 Yet, to continual strain the strongest links
 Of iron will loosen, and a sudden blow,
 Struck on the chain when tense, may snap at once
 What swinging loosely has hung strong for years.

Jo. Be troubled less. What has occur'd?

Her. At times,
 Methinks I hate her, as I do even now,

When, in her absence, rises up alone
The image of her scorn and on my ears
Ring her reproaches, and I loathe myself
For what I bear from her. But she comes; I gaze
On her transcendent beauty, and my soul
Melts into languor, or inflames with heat
Of longing as in youth, and seems it good
To lie in her lap by the hour and have her hand
Play with my loosen'd hair, the regal band
Thrown by as worthless. She might even shear
My power like Samson's. I should not complain,
Till from my daydream rous'd to find my strength
Gone with my locks.

Jo. What hath she done.

Her. But now,

I thought I should like to kill her, set my teeth
In her fair cheek, and with my fingers tear
Her dark eyes from their sockets. I could then
Have drunk her blood and eaten of her flesh,
And after kill 'd myself despairing. Hear.
That thought recalls my purpose and makes fix'd
What only now was floating in my brain
A half-form'd fancy. Give me time. Speak not.

After a pause.] Uncle, I must to Cæsar, and forthwith.
The master of the world, he holds my fate
Suspended in the balance. A known friend,
And favor'd, of Antonius, my claims
To his kindness, or forbearance even, weigh
Like feathers, while in the opposing scale

My enemies' arts and malice are as lead.
 If I can get before them, prove my zeal
 How useful to the victor by the faith
 I have kept with the vanquish'd, and have time to throw
 My gold amid the feathers, then the lead
 Goes up in turn, and Herod stands, as king,
 Firmer than ever. Else I might as well
 Beat out my brains like Phasael; ³³ for my doom
 Is ruin, haply death. If this should be,
 It were as nothing to the pang to know
 That Mariamne's beauty, haply love,
 Might joy another, that from their embrace
 New issue might arise, to make her blood
 Pretext of quarrel and rebellious claim
 Against my own sons. Wilt thou make me sure
 Such shall not happen, uncle?

Jo. Gladly. How?

Her. But wilt thou?

Jo. By what means?

Her. What count to thee

The means? For me alone the end: and I
 Alone am answerable. Wilt thou then
 Do what I bid thee? Nothing of thyself,
 But, in my absence, solely what I bid,
 In a contingency that may never fall?

Jo. I will.

Her. But swear it. 'T is the last one deed
 Of kindness thou canst do me. For, when done,
 I shall be dead; and only, am I dead,

Will it be done. Thus is thy promise given
As to a dying man. Swear then.

Jo. I swear.

Her. By Israel's God and by my father's soul.

Jo. By Israel's God and by thy father's soul.

Her. Give, on the instant thou shalt hear my fate,
Give to death Mariamne. Thou hast sworn.
Nor only her,—for Alexandra's arts,
Not vanity nor ruttish blood alone,
Would prompt to my dishonor; let the stroke
Fall on her mother likewise. I shall joy,
When I kneel down to meet the headsman's axe,
To know its echo in Judea here
Will send a double echo back to Rome,
And Herod's manes, as the heathen think,
Have their due victims. Thou hast sworn.

Jo. I have.

Her. Let me embrace thee, uncle. Thou art best,
As haply last, of Herod's friends. — Wait here.
When Mariamne comes, say I have given
Her over to thy charge till my return.
Come she not soon, so call the eunuch in
And summon her in my name. Farewell.

Jo. And thou.

And may thy fears prove but an ugly dream.

[*Exit Herod.*

But should 'st thou wake to realize them, then ——
Shall an oath bind to murder? Jephthah's vow
Was taken in heat of heart, which made his brain

Slow to forecast the possible result :
Or, if forecast, it bound him to an act
Not in his right to do. I, in constraint
Of personal fear, and taken by surprise,
Have sworn blindfolded ; and to do the act
When mine eyes are unbandag'd would be crime
Without disculp, and folly grave as crime,
The impulsive terror wanting ; for on me
Would fall prompt vengeance : Mariamne's sons —
Why, I were blind as Herod in his rage,
To do his bidding ! But he will not fall.
Bloody as brave, in whose ferocious heart
Throbs not one drop for pity or remorse,
He is sagacious, has a ready tongue,
A stately presence, and that open hand
Which argues better than the brain and makes
All tongues persuasive. He will still at Rome
Bear up the head triumphant which has wav'd
Its crest through hundred dangers and upheld
In seas of blood unspotted, as if crime
In him were hallow'd. Heaven keep him still
Unmerg'd till those who are tied to him float to shore.

Scene changes.

SCENE II.

A private room in Mariamne's Apartment.

MARIAMNE

seated on the floor, her face in both her hands.

Enter, eagerly,

ALEXANDRA.

Ala. In tears? Not for the news I bring?

Mar. What news?

Ala. I deem'd thou hadst heard it from himself: the King
Is going. I came to share thy joy.

Mar. For what?

Ala. At present liberty, for escape perhaps
From probable death, which overhangs us both,
Perpetual shadow, while the tyrant lives.

Mar. Mother, thou speakest of my spouse.

Ala. What then?

Is it not Herod, the fell beast whose jaws
Yet drip with human gore, my sire's, my son's?
When his maw craves again, it may be mine,
Or thine, thy children's, will new-wet the fangs
Already crimson with our royal blood.

Mar. Alas, thou mak'st the bitter fountain fill
To the brim again. It bubbled o'er but now
In the King's presence. He had come, I think,

To tell me of his going ; but my heart
Swell'd with resentment, and my arms drew back
When his own spread to me. But is he gone?
And whither?

Ala. He is going : at the gate
His train are waiting. 'T is to make his peace
With his new patron. Let us hope, tongue-craft,
Nor Judah's ravish'd gold, will chase the frown
From Cæsar's visage, but the axe or cage
Quiet our monster.

Mar. Mother, hush. To me
He still is gentle ; bearing, in his love ——

Ala. Love? Amorous heat ; the hunger of the heart
Fed on thy relishing beauty. Let the food
Once lose its savor, where art thou with him,
Whose passions all are brutal? If he fights,
Or kills, or loves, or grasps what is not his,
Or in his fears grows deadly, he is still
The lion or the leopard ; on his eyes
The lids close seldom fully, and his claws
Play fast and loose beneath their soft thick hair.
What did he when before he sought in haste
Antoni^{us}, summon'd to Laodicéa
For thy poor brother's murder? Did he leave
Our prison-doors unbarr'd? He shov'd the bolt
To the staple end, and set o'er us, as spy
And jailer both, his uncle. What he fear'd
Arose from me, and doubted was of thee.
He fears and doubts us now. His uncle came

In haste to meet him in the outer room

Of thy own chambers. Didst thou see him there?

Mar. No, I had left in anger. 'T was, 't is like,

To give me openly to Joseph's care.

Ala. Why to his care? Art thou not grown? Thou hast

Thy mother with thee, and thy sons if young

Are brave and manlike. What has he to trust

That is not safe with them, or with thyself?

There is something more in it. The eye and claw

Must be kept open, lest the vermin, left

Too broad a range —

Mar. Ah!

Ala. What hast thou?

Mar. A thought;

A memory; nothing. Herod us'd the word

Not in reproach; but I mistook it so.

Ala. Was the word "vermin"? ³⁴ Did the phrase touch thee?

Mar. No, not in any wise. It was our race,

He said, that burrow'd in his palace-walls;

And he spoke angrily: and I reply'd,

Angry as he, and with a haughtier phrase.

I do regret it.

Ala. That thou hast a soul?

That thou wast born of me? For 't is my spring

The Idumean cat would keep in reach

Of his great claws. Let Joseph come in here.

Mar. Here, in my private chamber?

Ala. Is he not

Thy husband's uncle, and his sister's spouse?

An old man too? And am I not beside?
 Let me bid call him in? He is lightly sway'd,
 And may tell Herod's purpose.

Mar. No, do not.

My lord departs in anger, and disdains
 To bid farewell. I must not vex him more.

Ala. How will he know it? Doth his uncle wait,
 As I was told, 'tis, by the King's desire,
 Expecting thee. But thou wouldst have him here.
 If he not wait for thee, no harm is done;
 The eunuch need not call him.

Mar. 'Tis great risk.

Ala. For my sake, Mariamne!

Mar. Yet awhile,

Till the King starts. He might in alter'd mood
 Come to take leave. Thou seest, it must be wrong,
 Or I should have no fear to be surpris'd.

Ala. Wrong to crave knowledge? Thou was not forbid
 To eat the apple. And it is, I say,
 For my sake, daughter. Herod will not come :
 His mood is not so pliant. Hark thou there !
 Those shouts ! and now, the clatter of the hoofs !
 He is gone already.

Mar. Gone? Without a care?

Call in the man then ; and do what thou wilt.

ALEXANDRA,

*glancing with satisfaction at Mariamne's rising color
 and haughty mien, turns to the door,
 as the Scene changes.*

SCENE III.

As in Act II. Scene II.

ANTIPATER.

Antip. Now, should my father not return — But soft;
Why should I wish it? Were my plans full-ripe —
But to Rome's now sure master scarcely known;
Unable to buy favor; the two forts
That overawe the city yet in hands
That are not friendly, and without that force
Might wrest them from their hold; the people's hearts
Inclin'd to Mariamne's brood, whose mien
And temper have that gewgaw show that takes
The popular regard, but unto me
Is index of a weakness that makes strong
My kinglier craft and adds to natural right
A natural advantage; my few friends
(I have such; men are alway friends to those
They hope to gain by) neither strong nor stanch,
While, in the palace — Why desires my aunt
To meet me with my mother here? Some plot,
Rash and unscrupulous. But I trust her not.
She hates my brothers, not of love for me
(Though there are times her eyes look into mine

Somewhat too greedily,) but hates for that
They are Mariamne's sons. —

Enter Doris

So glad? What's fallen?

Is Mariamne dead?

Do. Thou easily jump'st

To a conclusion, which is yet not far.

Antip. What mean'st thou?

Do. Death : death possibly ; but shame,

Certain and terrible for the pride that stands

Over thy mother daily, and the womb

That gave thee rivals to thy natural right,

Who art a king's son, though thou cam'st too soon

To be born such.

Antip. Which was my mother's fault,

Who wed my sire too early.

Do. A false jest.

More late, he had not wedded me at all,

Or given me but that second place had made

Thy brothers elder. Is thy present claim

Worse than than none? It shall be better soon

By what thy brothers lose, when comes the King

Back to avenge me by my rival's wo.

Antip. Speak no more riddles.

Do. No ; I must despatch,

Before thy aunt comes. First to thee ; then her.

But how she will receive it — She is here.

Enter SALOME.

Salo. What makes thy looks so bright?

Do. I would my news
Might give like light to thine. But ——

Salo. O, speak out :
I am not easily dash'd, nor made to grieve.

Do. Hadst thou e'er doubt of Joseph?

Salo. Of my spouse ?
Why no, and yes. I deem that, like all men's,
His eyes will wander. But his beard is gray ;
And wantonness costs more trouble to the old,
And hath not such sharp prompting.

Do. But the lash
Of habit drives the passions as before,
And men will sin because they *have* sinn'd.

Salo. Good.
Not Solomon, nor Sirach's son might speak
More pithily or aptly. What in fine
Hath Herod's uncle done?

Do. What, if I said
Made love to Herod's wife?

Salo. I should believe
Thou art deluded. Was it made to thee ?
Do. No, that were nothing ; nothing unto thee.
It was to Mariamne.

Salo. Art thou mad ?
Do. No, somewhat wild with joy, as thou shouldst be,
So he were not thy husband.

Salo. Mind me not.

What is this wonder? Briefly.

Do. Joseph went

But now to Mariamne, call'd by her

To her most private chamber, Herod gone.

Salo. How know 'st thou that?

Do. I saw him go,— was told

By the chief eunuch, he was call'd thereto.

Salo. By her?

Antip. Is not her mother there?

Do. My son,

Meddle not with affairs for which thy age

Has lent thee no experience. What should do

The King's high officer, though his grandsire's son,

In the King's wife's close chamber, say her dam

By chance was present, he, the King, away?

Salo. 'Tis flatly treason. Whether something more

Rests in conjecture, but is not unlike,

Seeing the wanton's untam'd blood and pride

Of petted beauty, and the scope now given

To gratify her lover and, through him,

Glut her huge hate of me. Well look 'st thou glad:

I came to scheme with you, with simple hope

Of an uncertain mischief: by one stroke

And with her own rash hand, lo, all is done.

When comes my brother back — [*pausing.*

Antip. What can he do?

There is no proof of crime.

Salo. And needs there such?

Suspicion asks for none, and jealous rage
Will not await it. Herod grows more fierce
By habit of his wrath; and Mariamne
Disdains to soothe it. When they parted now,
It was in anger. On my brother's front
The thunder-clouds yet lower'd.—

Do. Said he aught?

Salo. Nothing, except to curse her misproud blood.

When the storm roars again and lightning comes —

[*pausing.*

Antip. Poor Mariamne!

Salo. Hast thou pity then?

Do. It is not of the heart. His father wail'd

With louder clamor o'er the drown'd High-priest.

Salo. So young and crafty?

Antip. Nay, my mother errs;

I see not why this terrible wrong should be.

Salo. Then seest thou not thy interest. Be content.

We have one common object: I, in hate

For trampled pride; thy mother, in revenge

For wrong as well as outrage; thou, because

Of thy imperil'd rights: and thou alone

Wilt reap the real harvest. Be less nice.

If on the threefold altar of our cause

I offer up my husband, a weak man

Who gives me no offence, and even in this

Wrongs Herod and not me, why shouldst thou scan

So narrowly her fate to whom thou ow'st

That thou hast two stout rivals next the throne?

Let the proud wanton pay, as others do,
 The mulct of her misdeed, and if she go
 The way so many of her breed have gone,
 Shut both thine eyes,— or open them and praise God.

SALOME *moves to the door,*
 ANTIPATER and DORIS *attending her obsequiously ;*
and the Drop falls.

ACT THE FIFTH

SCENE I. *As in Act IV. Scene I.*

MARIAMNE. ALEXANDRA

entering hurriedly.

Ala. The King has come ! And with him comes the news
 Of Cleopatra and Antonius' death.
 So cold and silent ? Once, thou hadst heard with joy
 My first of tidings, and the last, if not
 With sorrow, yet surprise.

Mar. That time is gone,
 Perchance forever. Did the Egyptian die
 By her own hand ?

Ala. Right royally and strangely,

Bitten by asps, convey'd by her command
For that fix'd purpose, rather than be led
In triumph.

Mar. Say thou, rather than be made
Subjected to a man. 'T was well resolv'd.
Give me the ring.

Ala. The poison? Ah, my child,
Thou hast wak'd to reason. Thou wilt use it then
As meant the giver?

Mar. As befits me do. [*Puts it on.*

Ala. That is, against thy tyrant. And how else?
Now that by so long effort and deep craft
We have sounded Joseph's secret, what is left
To thee or unto me? But only this:
Either to take life or to yield it.

Mar. No.

Not, did the King not come, had Joseph dar'd,
Nay, he would not have chosen, kindly man,
To wreak such cruelty.

Ala. Suppose that so;
Or that in his despite we had made escape,
As I desir'd, thou know 'st, with his consent
And aid to do; what then? the will remains;
The tyrannous bloody will, the love of self,
Which has no sense for any outward thing
It may not draw to itself, where, in its web,
Centred, the swollen insect waits its prey,—
This, these remain, and threaten at all times.
Caprice, an accident, a heedless step,

May bring us once more in the tangled mesh
Wherethrough we have broken, and whose sticky threads
I feel upon me now. Thou seest I shake.
'T is no feign'd shudder. While the spider lives,
Our brains are not our own. What wilt thou do
When the wife-murderer, that would be, bounds in?
Inarm him? speak him fair?

Mar. Not till his soul
Stands free of this blood-charge.

Ala. How should that be?
Wilt thou put question to him?

Mar. Nothing less.
Out of his own mouth will I know if love
Must have its heart-food follow it to the tomb.

Ala. It was not love so hunger'd after me.

Mar. Thou wast not nam'd by Joseph.

Ala. No; but ask'd,
His silence gave sure answer. O my child,
For his sake, if not for thy own and mine,
Say nothing to thy tyrant: 't were his death.

Mar. No; was it not for Herod's sake alone,
Worry'd to hear me call his love in doubt,
That Joseph spake? The king can not take scorn
That in his interest, though indeed misjudg'd,
His secret was betray'd.

Ala. Nay, be advis'd!
Thy temper is too haughty; Herod's wrath
Is quick and deadly as a serpent's sting.
Heed me, I beg,—thou seest, with tears, my child:

It is our lives' risk ; and the beast — He comes ! [*low.*
Poison him, but provoke him not. [*Exit above, as*

Enter, from the left,

HEROD.

Her. My love ! —

Thy mother is kind to leave us to ourselves. —

What ! hast thou no embrace for me ? for me,

Rescu'd as 't were from death, and whose whole thought

Has been, from first to last, of thee alone ?

Mar. Ay, and beyond the last.

Her. What should that say ?

And the same angry look that gave farewell

Welcomes me back ! I might believe thee vex'd

I am safe return'd. What wouldst thou, Mariamne ?

Mar. Something less selfish. I would keep alive

All that I love, though 't were for others' good :

Thou wouldst entomb thy best possessions with thee,

And grudgest ev'n breath that is not breath'd for thee.

Her. Art thou distracted ? Speak thy sense more clear.

O my false hopes ! I bounded like a boy

To thy endearments, and I meet a corpse.

Death were not colder and wears no such look

Of a repelling scorn.

Mar. No, death is calm

And rigid. Would its stirless quiet suit

Better thy wishes ? That was not to be

Till thou wast dead.

Her. Hah ! Now thy sense is plain,

Though scarce clear-spoken. Where gatt'st thou the tale?

Mar. And is it true then? Didst thou doom thy wife

To share the untimely fate was meant for thee?

Her. Who told thee that? My uncle? Stand'st thou dumb?

Now! —

Mar. Harm him not. He sought to prove thy love,

Which I then question'd and now wholly doubt.

Kill me for love? But say it was not so;

Say that he did mistake thee. —

Her. Woman, no;

But foully hath he wrong'd me, he and thou.

What gav'st thou for his secret? Look'st thou scorn?

That proves not innocence. Guilt may wear that mieu;

And the proud blood resents the justest charge

That humbles it. That fix'd gaze blinds me not,

Nor thy dumb anger. Thou hast sold thy body

To Joseph for his secret, or 't was won

By its design'd betrayal. Nothing less

Had tempted or had paid him.

Mar. Art thou mad?

Her. Away! I'll search this out. Whate'er it prove,

He hath broken trust, and dearly shall he rue.

[*Exit.*

Mar. What have I done? The guiltless man will die.

Poor, kindly Joseph! who was only weak

And long withstood us. I will save him yet,

Cost what it may to this sinful, fatal pride.

SCENE II.

As in Act III. Sc. I.

SALOME. HEROD, *entering with perturbation*;
Salome advancing to meet him.

Salo. Happily come, my brother! God is just.

Her. Spare greeting. And I am not happily come.

Tell me of Marianne. Tell —

Salo. Alas!

Her. Why break'st thou on me with that cry and look?

Speak! What is wrong? What hath she done? Seest not
I am wild with my impatience?

Salo. If I pause,

'T is thinking how to tell what needs must grieve.

Her. Palter not: dost thou know me?

Salo. Ah, too well.

I fear thy temper: and this dreadful tale —

Her. Mean'st thou I shall go mad indeed with rage?

What is it? Thy husband? Joseph? In one word.

Salo. 'T is the King bids. Against my brother's peace,

I do his bidding. Scarcely wast thou gone,

When Mariamne sent for him. —

Her. For whom?

Salo. For Joseph.

Her. Sent? I bad him wait her coming

In her own outer room.

Salo. That would not suit

Their secret purpose.

Her. Hah! Whom sent she then?

Salo. The eunuch-chief.

Her. He shall to the torture straight.

Salo. Stay, and hear all. [*Going.*]

Her. Thou know'st this?

Salo. Doris saw,

Herself, the slave conduct him to the door

Of the inmost chambers, and there shut him in.

Her. Doris? She hates her!

Salo. Not the less may speak

The truth in this story, nor would dare do else.

O my poor brother, this is no strange tale:

Myself have long had reason to suspect

Their guilty intercourse.

Her. Nor made it known?

Salo. How durst I? And suspicion was not faith.

Now, it is more; 't is knowledge.

Her. And I bring

What makes conviction. Joseph has unbar'd

To her my secret. This herself made known

With scorn and anger, shunning my embrace.

Salo. Conscious of her pollution. What was then

Thy secret?

Her. Matters it? Say I had bid

Her life should end with mine?

Salo. It were enough

To impel to a revenge which Joseph made,
'T is like, the price of treason.

Her. Paid or not,
His head shall reimburse it.

Salo. Paid or not?
Is there a doubt?

Her. Until the accursed deed
Be proven, ay. The Sanhedrim shall search it.
Salo. Thou canst not call them now. Wilt thou then wait
Till the blood cools?

Her. It will not cool till blood
Of kindred veins is pour'd upon the fire.
Why dost thou stop me, if thou 'dst have me haste?
Salo. Not to arrest thy justice. Let its bolt
Fall on the traitor; but his paramour —
I grieve to sting thee, brother — let thy spouse,
Who tempted and rewarded him, be scath'd
By the same lightning.

Her. She shall not escape.

[*Exit precipitately, followed by Salome.*]

SCENE III.

The Hall of the Throne, as in Act III. Sc. III.

*In the background, in their due positions,
the chief Officers of the household, and the Guards, drawn
up to receive the King.*

*Before them, waiting for the same purpose,
in the centre, ALEXANDER and ARISTOBOULOS ;
on the right, ANTIPATER and DORIS,—
a little behind whom, SIMEON ;
on the left, ALEXANDRA and JOSEPH.*

Enter MARIAMNE.

Alexandra comes down to meet her, Joseph following, but more slowly.

Mar. O mother! Thou hast ruin'd Joseph.

Ala. How?

Mar. Ask not. The King is furious. Bid him fly.

Thou wilt not? Then the risk be mine.

To Jos. who has now approached.] Go, go;
Thy life hangs by a thread. Stay not to think.
Fly from the court, unhappy! till the King
Shall come to reason.

Jo. Hast thou lost me then?

Mar. Yes, yes; I have wrong'd and ruin'd thee. Let not

Thy death be on my conscience. Wilt thou stand
 Bewilder'd? Thou hast not a breath to spare.
 I was rash and cruel-selfish, and reveal 'd
 What thou didst tell me, and reproach'd my lord,
 Who put on thy goodnature a vile sense
 I cannot name. Thou seest thy danger now.
 Go.

Jo. But go whither?

Mar. Anywhere to lurk
 Till the King's wrath blow over. Leave to me
 The consolation not to think thee lost.
 Too late! too late!

Enter HEROD.

Simeon } Hail, Herod King!
and others. }

Her. Arrest

The traitor Joseph, and without delay
 Strike off his head.

Mar. No, no! He is not to blame!
 'T was my fault, Herod. He would not have sinn'd,
 Had I not tempted him.

Her. And dar 'st thou this?

Even to my beard! Now, by my father's sword —

Mar. Take no rash oath. Forgive me, and on him

Have mercy. He but err'd in love for thee.

Her. In love for me? Adulteress!

Mar. Ah!

Her. Thy tongue

Is mute again o' the sudden. But thy looks

Vainly resume their insolent disdain.

What! hast thou dropp'd it? Well. But not that change

To stony apathy will avail thee aught,

Or move my judgment.

To Capt. of the Guards.]

Must I bid again?

Out with the traitor and strike off his head.

Jo. Hear me! —

Her. No word. Away with him, I say!

Mar. Farewell, kind Joseph. Thou art better off

Than bound to a tyrant's service. A brief pang

Saves thee from all that misery I must bear.

Her. Let him not speak.

Jo. [*as he is hurried off.*

God bless thee, Mariamne.

[*Exit with Guard.*

Her. 'T will not be here.

To Mar.] Since thou preferrest his pang,

Thine shall be like it. Bear her off to death.

Sim. My lord the King! —

Antip. My father! —

Alex. [*who, with Aristo., clings to Mar.*

O my mother!

Her. Simeon, what would'st thou? But beware! thy mouth

Breathes on the fire.

Sim. Let its flames stretch out

Their fork'd tongues to lick up my blood, if aught

I utter save what fits the King to hear.

Her. To the point, ere I forget what thou wast once.

Sim. What would my lord do? Will his wrath o'erleap
The bounds of law and justice? Shall men say
That Herod in his anger would not wait
To sift the proofs, but from his council snatch 'd
The right to adjudge to death?

Her. The proofs are clear
And need not sifting, and the treasonous crime
Admits of no delay. What! shall the King
Hold back his hand, where not the meanest slave
Would in his own case hesitate to strike,
Or striking would be censur'd? What hast thou,
Antipater, to urge? Be quick; nor think
To stay the lightning.

Antip. No, to change its course.

Her. Hah! What wouldst thou?

• *Antip.* Why should blood be shed?

That in a moment wipes out all remorse
And makes punishment transient. Give, O sire,
Her body to the dungeon. So shall men
Applaud thy mercy, and the future time
Want pretext to attain the Great King's name
With cruelty or rashness.

Her. Boldly said,
But not unwisely.

Do. [*apart to Antip.*

No, but take thou heed
Thy craft trip not thyself.

Salo. Beware, O King!
Thy heart is wax to beauty. 'T was the wiles

Of woman that shore Samson of his strength
 And made the wisest of all earthly kings
 Turn from his God to idols. Wouldst thou give
 The adulteress power to guile thee by soft words
 Of fabulous explanation, that, set free,
 She may ope the door of her chamber to more men?

Her. Hah! What hast thou to answer? [*to Mar.*

Alex. Mother, speak.

Show the King thou art innocent, as thou art.
 O father, listen! For us, if not for her,
 Stain not our names.

Her. Peace! is it of my will?

Why speaks she not?

Aristo. Why should she speak? The heart
 Swells at unjust reproach too much for speech:
 Guilt leaves it freer.

Her. Look thou to thyself.

Grows thy young blood rebellious, it shall out
 Though all the Maccabees had fill'd thy veins
 And thou wast my sole issue. — Once again,
 And for the last time, what hast thou to say?

Mar. Nothing.

Her. Nothing?

Mar. Even so much as that

Tortures my spirit more than 't will to go
 The way my grandsire and my brother led.

Her. Sayst thou? So be it. Go. [*making a sign to the Guard.*

Ala. Go, wicked heart

And stony, on whose harden'd guilt nor love

Nor lenience makes impression.

Mar. Mother!

Ala. Go!

Mar. I pity thee. Not thus thou wilt escape
The jaws that gape for thee and for us all.
O my poor boys! my beautiful! my brave!
My darlings! Take my blessing — and my fears.
Be prudent and more humble. Anger not
The King: he is your sire. I seem to see
Your manly yet young necks already spout
In the air their life-blood. —

Her. Part them!

Mar. This will do it

[opening the ring.

As promptly as thy guards, and for all time
As surely as the axe. Thanks, Cleopatra.

[Throws down the ring.

Her. What means she? *[Mar. falls into her sons' arms.*

Alex. Mother! mother!

Aristo. Oh!

Antip. Alas, ³⁵

She is in convulsions. Help! Is there no help?

HEROD stands as if stupified.

Ala. Pity not her. But pity the great king
To whom she was so thankless.

Her. [in fury.] Thankless? Never!

Or was she so, it was that thou didst prompt,
Thou the she-serpent ever in her ear

Hissing the thought of evil. Ho there, guards!
 Lead off this woman. Let the headsman's block
 Soak her rank blood. No word from any one!
 Who speaks for her shall die.

*ALEXANDRA is led off, SALOME attending
 the group to the door, her eyes fixed
 the whole time on Alexandra.*

Her. [*kneeling by Mar.*] O Mariamne!
 Art thou then going?

Antip. She is gone, my lord.
 Her hands are cold already.

Her. O come back!
 Come back but to forgive me. Ope those lips, [*kissing her.*
 My beautiful and lov'd! I will believe
 All thou shalt say, so thou wilt but forgive.
 Thou wast too proud to sin, and I was mad.
 Was that a breath?

Antip. Alas, the final gasp.

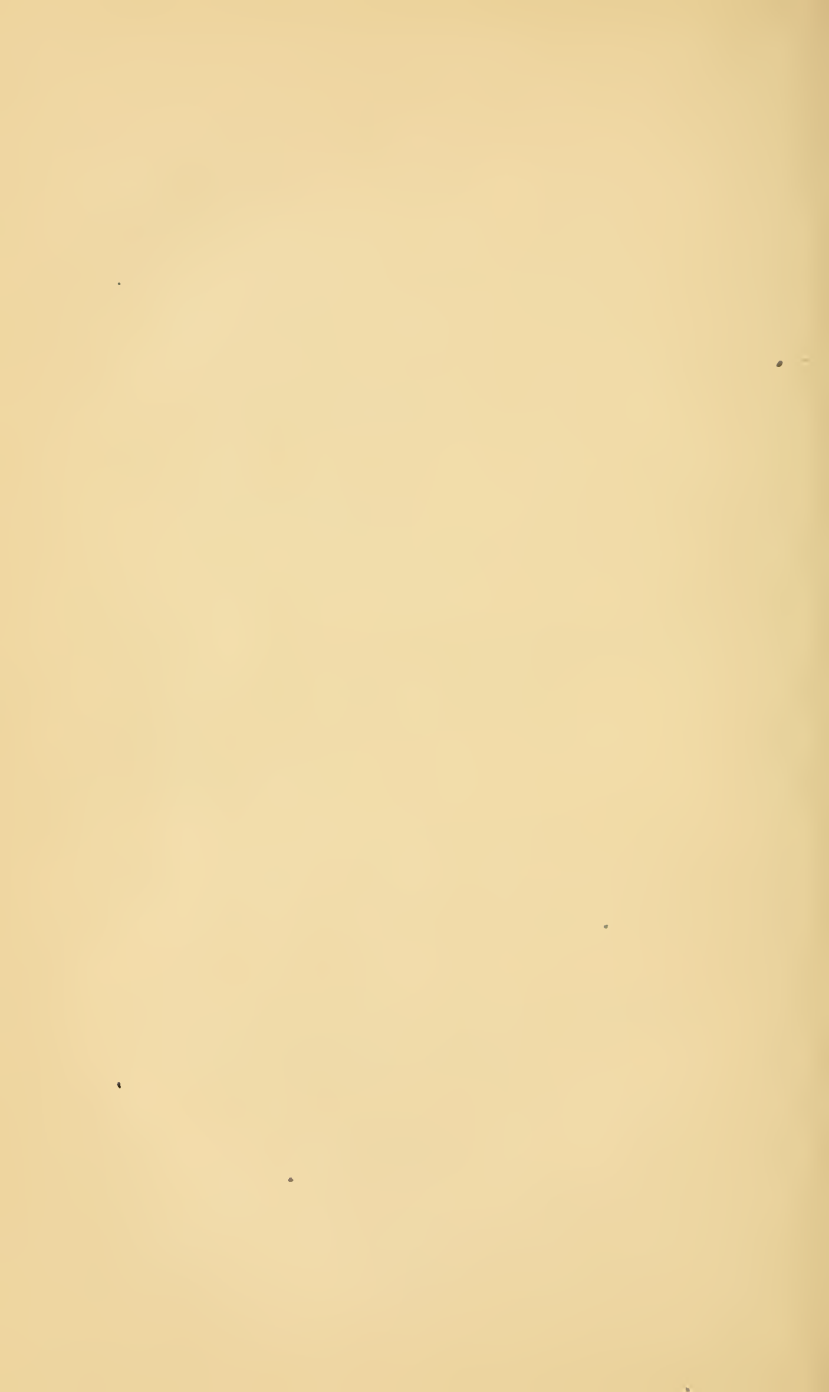
*SIMEON brings a cushion. MARIAMNE is laid down
 by ALEXANDER and ARISTOBOULOS, who kneeling, each on
 one knee, remain at her head,
 covering their faces.*

Her. Dead? dead? Yes, yes, her cheeks are cold, her lips.
 O that I might bring down this house in ruins
 And bury us all with thee! O Mariamne!

[Falls over the body.]

The Curtain drops.

NOTES



NOTES TO MARIAMNE

1.—P. 167. *I found them on the sea shore*—] Namely, of the Dead Sea. Josephus tells us merely of Alexandra's secret correspondence with Cleopatra, and of Alexandra's attempted escape to Egypt with her son, she having had two coffins made in which they were carried to the seaside, as though they were dead bodies. He says nothing of the escort, which I take from the defeated stratagem of Hyrcanus, alluded to in *Sc.* 3. But there is nothing improbable in the idea of Cleopatra's sending one on this occasion.

2.—P. 168. —*the Galatians.*] The supposed escort which Cleopatra had sent. Antony had given her as a guard 400 of these men, which body was transferred to Herod after her death, along with Galatia, by the favor of Augustus. *Josephus.*

3.—P. 168. —*Æsop.*] That one of Alexandra's servants who, supposing Sabbion to be already in the secret, inadvertently spoke to him about the preparation for flight. *Id.*

4.—P. 168. — *in my great father's death* —] Antipater, Herod's father, was poisoned by Hyrcanus' butler, at the instigation of one Malichus, a Jewish commander in the time of Cassius. *Id.*— In the Greek, *Sabbion* has the accent on the penultima—Σαββίων. But as the o is long, it is very difficult to pronounce the name except with the stress of the voice on the last or the first syllable, which latter mode is adopted for the text as at once the more natural and more proper one in English. It is thus that Ovid (*Fast.* v. 5), while, in his laudable partiality for Greek terminations in the inflection of Greek names, adopting *Orïōna*, has shortened the penultimate:

“Quorum si mediis Bæoton Oriōna quæres.”

This kind of alteration is, however a very general one in all tongues. It is the genius of the language into which they are transferred that inevitably dictates in the case of proper and geographical names the mode of their reception; and there can be no rule to govern us in their pronunciation except polite usage. Thus *Hêrôdês* becomes *Hêrôd* in English, while *Aristobulus*, preserving in its accentuation the quantity both of the original and of the Latin form, is with advantage written, as in the text, *Aristoboulos*.

5.—P. 169. *I lifted to the seat that was her sire's* —] It is one of the many illustrations of the decline in the strict observance of the ancient law that prevailed at this time in Judea, that Herod could act in the matter of the high-priestship as he did. While affecting to show great respect to Hyrcanus, whom he had managed to get into his power by persuading or encouraging him to come to Jerusalem, he sent for an obscure Jewish captive of Babylon (so Josephus speaks of this person, though in

his very next chapter (*Antiq.* xv. iii) he says with more probability he was of the lineage of the high-priests) named Ananelus, and puts him in that seat which Hyrcanus, lately hierarch and king, could no longer fill, as will presently be seen (*note* 9). But Alexandra, Hyrcanus' daughter and Herod's mother-in-law had, besides Mariamne, a child by Alexander who resembled greatly the latter's father Aristobulus the king, whose name he bore, and Alexandra took it ill that he should not have been preferred. So she managed by secret message to Cleopatra to interest in his behalf Antonius, who, allured by the picture of his beauty according to Josephus, desired to have the boy. To allow of his departure, with the chance of the Triumvir's favor, would not have suited Herod, whose object was to get and keep the whole of Hyrcanus' family in his power, to dispose of them as his interests suggested. Therefore pretending to the Roman that it would have caused trouble in Jerusalem to permit the royal youth to leave, and to Alexandra, and others at home, that he had only set up Ananelus because of Aristobulus' extreme youth, he agrees to put the latter, although then not seventeen years old, in his place. Alexandra, as crafty as Herod, though without his force and determination, affected to be content, disclaiming any idea of the supreme civil power in connection with her son. And so matters stood at the opening of the drama, both secretly detesting each other, but Alexandra fearing while continually plotting, and Herod, with a tyrant's eye, ever on the watch to circumvent her, and never more so than when he seemed most careless and secure.

6. — P. 170. — *who starv'd his mother, and took off By murderous hands his brother —*] Aristobulus, the eldest of the sons of John Hyrcanus, and the first of the Asamo-

nean race who wore the diadem. Both murders were committed through the jealousy of an ambition which has been the source of so many personal crimes in every monarchy.

7.—P. 170. —*those brave men, Sprung with their sire from a village priest*—] The five sons of Matthias or Mattathias, son of Asamoneus or Asmoneus. It was from the ablest of these, Judas, surnamed *Maccabeus*, that arose the well-known name which always conveys to us an idea of heroism and patriotic worth. The family, and especially their descendants, are otherwise known as the Asamonean or Asmonean race, from the name of their obscure progenitor.

8.—P. 171. —*to cross And prison, etc.*] Herod's energies, in the commencement of his reign, were largely directed to the extirpation of the robbers that infested Judea.

9.—P. 171. —*with his earless head*—] Antigonus, son of Aristobulus, when by the aid of the Parthians he had got possession of Judea, caused Hyrcanus' ears to be lopped off, that, being thus mutilated, he might be rendered incapable, by the law of Moses, of regaining the high-priestship. In one place, (*Wars* I. xiii.), Josephus tells us that Antigonus tore them off with his own teeth. Herod, acting on the advice of Hyrcanus' daughter Alexandra, mother of Mariamne, to whom he was betrothed, escaped from Jerusalem and probable death at the hands of Antigonus, while his brother Phasaëlus, captive like Hyrcanus, put himself with a valorous desperation to death by dashing his head against a rock, or perhaps the wall of his prison, his hands being bound.

10.—P. 171. — *his great precursor*—] John of that name, mentioned in Note 6 ; an able and fortunate ruler.

11.—P. 171. *Whose downy lips, etc.*] This is alluded to in Note 5. Josephus would have it that Alexandra sent pictures of both Mariamne and her young brother to Antonius, with an abominable purpose ; and that the licentious Roman was deterred from sending for Mariamne, as he did for the boy, out of fear of Cleopatra. The historian's acquaintance with the Romans of his time, made him sufficiently familiar with their bestial proneness to the vice against nature, and he distinctly charges Herod (*Antiq.* xvii. ii. *ad fin.*) with a like enormity, which we cannot call imitative, because Moses, fresh from the abominations of Egypt, made it, 1500 years before, a subject of penal prohibition : *Levit.* xx. 13 and 23.

12.—P. 173. — *O my lord the King, Thou art too bountiful.*] Liké many other tyrants, Herod was lavish in expenditure where to be so subserved his interests ; and in the ostentation of his ambition he spared not in the adornment of his realm. But of real generosity it may well be questioned if he was capable, since he appears to have been almost destitute of any feeling of benevolence, or of any real affection apart from that which is evinced by egotistical and selfish persons, who seem to be tender of those who are part of them, and readily defend their interests or avenge their wrongs, but sacrifice them unscrupulously on the very first offence or in the simple jealousy of suspicion. Thus we see cruel and thoroughly selfish men often fond of animals and stanch to those of their own kind who, like dogs, stand by them in good and bad report. But wo to both dog and friend, when it suits them better to cast them off than to maintain them.— See Note 14.

13.—P. 173. —*and the greed Of my wife's foresire, etc.*—] John Hyrcanus, who opened the sepulchre of David, and, according to Josephus, took thence 3,000 talents: a preposterous statement, but in keeping with other exaggerations of the historian and with his remark, *in loc.* (*Antiq.* XIII. viii.), that David in wealth surpassed all other kings. Herod, in the needs of his ambition, essayed the adventure of the Maccabee, but found nothing save the golden ornaments, which he did not scruple to appropriate, and was only deterred from penetrating to the very place of the dead by a miraculous flame which, as was reported, slew two of his guards. (*ib.* XVI. vii.)

14.—P. 173. *My lord's soul is too large for this small realm, etc.*—] In Chap. v. Book XVI. of the Antiquities, we have it said in relation to the magnificence of Herod in celebrating games on the occasion of the completion of the building of Cæsarea Sebaste,—a magnificence grossly exaggerated, as everything of the kind that respects outlay of money or splendor of construction is by Josephus throughout,—*And they say that both Cæsar himself and Agrippa oftentimes remarked, that the extent of Herod's rule was not adequate to the magnanimity which was in him; for he was worthy of having the kingdom of all Syria and of Egypt.* ed. Hudson (*Oxon.* in fol. 1720) T. ii. p. 720.

In the concluding § of the chapter, the Jewish historian shows himself somewhat of a reasoner, notwithstanding his ill-considered remark as to Herod's natural beneficence. He finds nothing irreconcilable in his magnificence and his cruelty. He paints him in fact as a true type of the Eastern tyrant, prompt, cruel, and wide-sweeping in the execution of his resentments, lavish in all that tended to the glory of his reign in pomp and

outward greatness, and avaricious, because his very lavishness made it necessary for him to oppress his people to procure the means of its display.

15.—P. 184. *But to me, O Lord, etc.*] This is not overstrained hypocrisy on the part of Herod. I need not remind the reader of the devotional spirit ascribed to Louis XI. and so well depicted in one of the very foremost of romances, and one of the foremost of all that we owe to the greatest of all novelists, *Quentin Durward*. But turn to the *Psalms of David*, and we shall find even that pious king offering in like manner to bribe the All-giving, and to blind the All-knowing. If he promises not a temple, yet he holds out the supposed attractions of laud and grateful adoration.*

It is, I am sorry to add, a religious misconceit which perhaps has been transmitted to us through the oral services of our own imitative worship, but which nevertheless is but the natural sequence and at the same time accompaniment of human egotism and mental blindness. Our conceptions of the Deity are founded on the knowledge of ourselves, and, similar in all religions and at every era, are naturally most degraded where the mind is most debased and kept most servile.

As *Mariamne* may one day be represented, let it be permitted me, whose sacrifice of poetry to truth, or rather of the ornamental to the proper in rhetorical art, is not acknowledged and not always comprehended, to annex other and more ornate readings for the close of the Act. I have rejected them from the publica-

* See in relation to Herod, to whom Josephus unreflectingly assigns both greatness of mind and piety, the observation at the close of chap. xx. Bk. I. of the *Wars*, in connection, as the historian himself designs, with the opening of the next chapter.

tion-copy, because, as I have indicated for my own use in the original draught, they "are not natural in the situation."

The yet green sceptre-rod. And I, O Lord,
 Forgive Thou me this necessary crime,
 Will build Thy House, where once the Cherubs stood
 With wings that touch'd before the cover'd Ark,
 Shading Thy glory, greater than before;
 That pagans, *etc.*

Will build Thy House, where once the Cherubim,
 With golden wings that met before the Ark,
 Shadow'd Thy glory, greater than before;
 That, *etc.*

16.—P. 188. *As thought our sires.*—] The Jews had no belief, certainly none positive or general, in a future state, till after the Captivity. Moses, in combining with so many of the ceremonies of the religion to which he was bred, the pure idea of the one God which was probably the secret creed of the Egyptian priesthood, had no conception of that lofty, and for good men consolatory faith, which had its cradle in the farther East. But after they had embraced it, his people were not better than before, as witness the horrors of this Herod's reign. It is a mournful thought, yet a true one, that the belief in an after state, while it sustains virtue, and lifts still higher the soul that is already above the earth, arrests not vice, while it is often, and especially through the fatal doctrine of the atonement, the stronghold of the hypocrite and the convenient cover under which the religionist that is not virtuous commits innumerable wrongs against his own soul as well as the well-being of others.

17.—P. 190. *Is with his other wives.*] Herod had ten in all, including Doris and Mariamne; and all living at one time.

18.—P. 195. *And by his shrunk thigh, etc.] Genesis, xxxii. 24, 25, and 31, 32.*

19.—P. 202. *To farm of me, etc.] Jos. Ant. xv. iv.*

20.—P. 205. *For the tiara, not the purple bend—] Or, for the Stage :*

For the priest's bonnet, not the royal bend.

21.—P. 208. — *which the Lord hath spar'd So often in worse danger—] Josephus records two instances (Antiq. xiv. xv. §§ 11, 13) of what he seems to consider a providential intervention in the accidents of Herod. It is not inconsistent with his atrocious character, and perfectly consistent with its vigorous egotism, that the Jewish tyrant should interpret his escape in the same way. History is liberal of instances of kings as wicked, who had the same belief in their special protection by Providence.*

22.—P. 210. *puissant—] Is here but of two syllables, as in its French original; and the first one is pronounced as the similar one in the law term "puisne": pew'sānt (the short a running into the sound of short e or short i.)*

23.—P. 210. *What had done, etc., etc.] See Jos. Ant. xvii. vi.; or Notes to The New Calvary,—Note 25, p. 151 of this volume. The cause of the atrocity is however sufficiently intimated in the present text.*

But on reflection, and considering Josephus' aptness to overestimate, and his easy credulity in matters of tradition, I am inclined to think that the number of the victims is greatly exaggerated. What should forty men be doing in such a task?

They would be in one another's way. Ten were an embarrassing number, and four or five must have been more than enough. It may well be however that the larger number comprehends all who were in anyway concerned, those who abetted and applauded the movement as well as those who took an active part in it. Indeed we are told, that the forty were those who stood their ground on the approach of the guard, the rest of the crowd dispersing. Herod, to whose atrocity is ascribed the mythical absurdity of the *Massacre of the Innocents*,* was, in his old age, ferocious enough to take so sweeping a revenge.

His stupendous cruelty in fact amounted to a monomania, and it is far more a matter of wonder that the Jews should have brooked so merciless a tyrant, than that on his deathbed he should have given that monstrous order for the slaughter of the principal men in the hippodrome, and overlooked the obvious probabilities that Salome would not dare to obey him or daring would not be permitted.

24.—P. 211. *But half a Jew:*] Thus Antigonus, when Herod was before Jerusalem; while the old robber, who surprised in his cavern preferred suicide to crucifixion, threw in his teeth the meanness of his origin. (Jos. *Ant.* xiv.) The historian himself, with his usual inconsistency, after dilating on the nobleness of the stock of the Asamoneans, and telling of its end through Herod, the son of a man who was of merely a common family and of no distinguished descent (*ib. ad. fin.*) says elsewhere (*Wars.* i. vi.), that Herod's father was one of the foremost persons of Idumea, not only in his *ancestry* and wealth, but by the authority he held! *cf. Ant.* xiv. i. 3. In fact, the pride

* See however (for what it is worth) the last § in the Dissertation of Cellarius below referred to.

of Mariamne's family, which was a principal cause of Salome's fatal hatred, had some such sort of foundation as the Cardinal de' Medici's vehement disdain of the Capelli. (See *Bianca Capello*, text and notes: Vol. I. pp. 285 and 357, sqq.) It was not 50 years since the Asamonean race wore the diadem in the person of Aristobulus, son of John Hyrcanus. Thus: Aristobulus 1 year, Alexander Janneus 27 years, Alexandra, widow of Janneus, 9. And during the reign of Aristobulus, her son and successor, and his contention with his brother, the Hyrcanus of my text, Antipater was made by Cæsar procurator of Judea, and appointed Herod governor of Galilee, and Phasael governor of Jerusalem. (*infra*, Note 29.) Then Herod is made procurator of Syria by Cassius and Brutus. Then Antony makes Herod and Phasael tetrarchs (*note* 30), and finally Herod king. And Josephus says that, on account of the merit of these two sons and of his own, Antipater was honored as a king by the nation. *Wars* I. x. 5. See the *Dissert. Cellarii* appended to Hudson's ed., § III.

25.—P. 211. *Thou wak'st a frightful memory.* Etc.] Herod introduced games after the manner of the Romans, in honor of Cæsar, and, with like imitative magnificence, built a theatre at Jerusalem and an amphitheatre in the plain. All of which caused great offence, but especially the trophies which surrounded the theatre, and which the Jews took or affected to take to be images of men covered with armor, until he showed them they were simple wooden frames so enveloped. But he did not thereby content the more bigoted or the seditious. So there was formed a desperate conspiracy of ten men to slay him in the theatre. It was discovered by one of his spies, and the ten were put to death with tortures. Thereupon the spy was

torn to pieces by an enraged mob, and thrown to the dogs. To find out the perpetrators of this retaliatory act and avenge the insult thus offered to his authority, Herod, in the absurd as well as cruel practice of that barbarous day, which suited well his nature, habits, and notions of repressive rule, put to the torture certain women, who confessed, probably without knowledge, as to what they had witnessed, and the despot made clean work of the entire families of those accused by this extorted confession. *Antiq.* xv. viii: where the record of these events follows that of Mariamne's death. But in the *Wars* (I. xxi.) it is made to precede it.

26.—P. 215. *The earthquake, that late rag'd—*] See *Ant.* xv. v. § 2.

27.—P. 217. *His royal blood, etc.*] Mariamne was on the father's side daughter of Hyrcanus' brother's son, as on the mother's of Hyrcanus' daughter.

28.—P. 217. *And render'd tributary.*] *Antiq.* xv. v.

29.—P. 218. *Did I, when, etc.*] When Herod was 25 years old, his father Antipater, Procurator of Judea, as we have seen, and an able man, set him over Galilee, making at the same time Phasael, Herod's elder brother, governor of Jerusalem. Hyrcanus was then High-priest, and nominally King. Herod clears Syria of robbers; Phasael also deserves well in his government; and Antipater and his sons grow greatly in favor with the people. (Compare, above, Note 24.) This excited envy, and perhaps a reasonable apprehension, among the principal men, who set Hyrcanus against Antipater and his family. Among other things in proof of the tyrannical disposition of Herod,

they urged that he had of his own volition slain Hezekias chief of the robbers, although the death-punishment in any case was forbidden except when authorized by the Sanhedrim. So too the mothers of others slain implore Hyrcanus to bring Herod to trial. Sextus Cæsar, president of Syria, writes to Hyrcanus to have Herod cleared. Hyrcanus, who loved the latter (according to Josephus,) and was moreover of a pliant and irresolute temper, readily yielded to what was in fact a command. But, at the suggestion of Antipater, Herod appeared before the Sanhedrim with an armed escort. Then stood up Sameas, (called by the Talmudists *Simeon son of Shetach*,*) a just man and therefore superior to fear,† and pointing out the enormity of this appearance of Herod, who should have come before them in the usual attire and with the humbleness of one accused, warned them that Herod would one day punish them and the King also. *Antiq.* xiv. ix. : *Wars.* i. x. Compare *Antiq.* xv. i. § 1 ; where Josephus assigns to one *Pollio*, a Pharisee (of whom he says Sameas was a disciple) the uttering of this sagacious prediction. See Note 32.

30.—P. 213. *Was't I who, etc.*] A large number of the principal Jews came to Antony near Antioch and accused Herod and Phasael of usurpation of the government and defiance of the natural and acknowledged rights of Hyrcanus, to whom they had left nothing but the name of power. Hyrcanus was present, and Antonius having heard both the Jews and Messala

* Whiston, after Reland. Talboys' ed. Oxf., 1839. In Bohn's ed. 1847, it is spelled *Shetaoh*. I have adopted that which is most likely to be the true reading, having no opportunity to verify either.

† . . . δίκαιος ἀνὴρ, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τοῦ δεδιέναι κρείττων . . . A notable, indeed noble sentiment, which I could wish were philosophically correct.

who (probably at the instigation of the triumvir) defended the brothers, turned to Hyrcanus and asked him as in the text, receiving the answer as there given. The Roman accordingly made the brothers tetrarchs and confirmed them in the government. *Wars.* i. xii.

31.—P. 219. *When from my Parthian refuge —*] When on the capture of Jerusalem, mentioned in *Note 9*, Hyrcanus was carried off by the Parthians, he was treated generously by their king, who set him free and assigned him a habitation in Babylonia among his own countrymen. These showed the unfortunate high-priest the honor due to his former condition and his hereditary rank ; and it was in despite of their remonstrances, that Hyrcanus, yielding to his own desire, the flattery of his hopes and Herod's treacherous solicitations, returned for the last time to the fatal city.

32.—P. 221. *I owe thee much :*] It was Sameas (*Simeon* of the text), or Sameas together with Pollio, who at the siege of Jerusalem by Herod and Sosius, Antony's general, advised the people, as the least of two evils, to admit Herod. *Antiq.* xiv. ix. and xv. i.

33.—P. 226. *Beat out my brains like Phasaël —*] See *Note 9*, at its close.

34.—P. 231. *Was the word "vermin" ?*] Josephus, in more than one place, speaks of *Alexandra* as a woman of unusual shrewdness. To assign to her, as here by implication, perspicacity, quickness of observation, and promptness in deduction, is not to overdraw her character.

I beg leave to add, that I have the same authority for the

ability shown by *Antipater* and *Salome*, and for the cunning of *Doris*. These therefore, with *Herod*, *Mariamne*, and the other prominent personages, are historical portraits, painted with such exactness of design as it is possible to give them in a work of this nature. The coloring is, as I dare to claim it to be in all my dramas, perfectly after nature.

35.—P. 251. *What means she?* etc.] The natural and first reading was :

Her. What doth she mean ?

Alex. [*Aristo. silently weeping.*

Mother ! mother !

Antip. Alas !

but, unhappily, it is rhythmically defective. The passionate Aristoboulus *silently weeping* is not only more characteristic but effective than the exclamation which was required to fill up the verse in the text.

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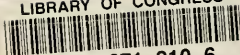
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